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# ELEMENTS OF RETAIL SALESMANSHIP

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# ELEMENTS OF RETAIL SALESMANSHIP

BY

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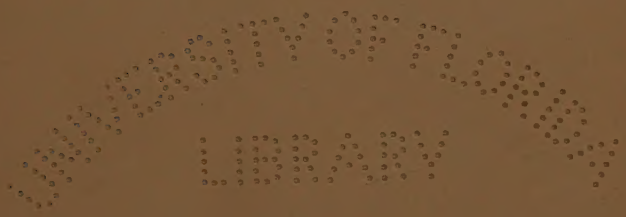

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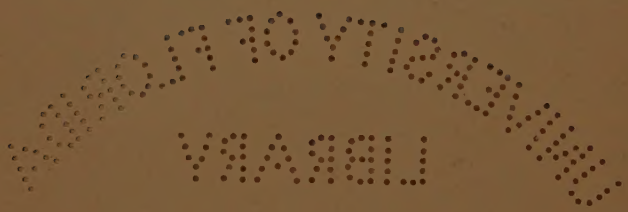

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TO MY WIFE

IN APPRECIATION OF HER AID
IN THE PREPARATION OF
THIS VOLUME

# INTRODUCTION

In the following treatise an attempt is made to present the elements of salesmanship and show how they may be profitably applied to retail selling. Until recently, retail stores have not seen the wisdom or the necessity of systematically and scientifically training their salespeople in selling goods. With the widening scope of mail order business and the increasing competition between towns due to better transportation facilities, methods of selling goods are receiving attention that a few years ago would have seemed misplaced. Selling service has now become as important as selling goods. The significance of this new development and its application to retail stores forms the ground plan for the material herein presented.

The chief reason for the presentation of this book before the public at this time is the many requests that have come from salespeople in the department stores where the author has lectured asking for the incorporation of the lecture material in a permanent form. It is with the hope of gratifying the wishes of these students of salesmanship as well as that of satisfying a distinct need now felt by progressive retailers for a practical text for store classes in salesmanship, that this treatise appears in its present form. If it serves to make the salesperson see the educational possibilities in her [1] work and the re-

[1] The feminine gender is used throughout this book because ninety-five per cent of the customers and salespeople in department stores are women.

lation of better service to community welfare, it will have accomplished the purpose for which it was intended.

No originality is claimed for the principles of salesmanship herein introduced. However, some of these have been applied in a new way and related to retail selling where heretofore they have for the most part been presented in relation to other phases of selling goods. This intimate relating of general principles of salesmanship to retail selling by means of illustrations and special retail problems makes the book of special value to the retail salesperson, although the student of salesmanship in high schools and colleges will find much that will be of interest.

For the source materials the author is indebted to many merchants, salespeople and teachers with whom he has conducted the teaching of salesmanship. Also, the many books on salesmanship, especially the more recent ones, have contributed numerous important ideas, individual acknowledgment of which would be impossible. Most important of all sources, however, is the selling experience that the author is fortunate enough to have had. It is believed that this combination of practical experience with theoretical knowledge is sufficient qualification for presenting the most important elements of retail salesmanship.

PAUL W. IVEY.

Chicago, Illinois.

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# RETAIL SALESMANSHIP

## CHAPTER I

## MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

Before the student of salesmanship can comprehend the changes that are taking place in retailing or can foresee the possibilities of the future in the merchandising of goods, it is extremely necessary to realize clearly and comprehensively the important changes that have transpired in other fields of production. The fact must soon be borne in on the student's mind that only through *change* does progress appear; that the possibility of progress in the production and distribution of goods in any state or country rests on the ability and willingness of the masses as well as the leaders to change their minds. In other words, open-mindedness precedes change or progress, and the latter can never appear in practical effort to benefit mankind unless it enters through the door of the former. When the minds of any body of people become opposed to change, when they become inflexible and static, then we have what are known as Dark Ages. Because of this static nature of people's minds, their opposition to change, their willingness to do as their fathers have done, many towns in the United States are "backward" and are accomplishing little as com-

pared to other towns with equal advantages and opportunities. Because of unwillingness to adopt new ideas, China is still plowing her millions of acres with crooked sticks, and spinning and weaving by hand processes. In some other lines of endeavor she is equally backward, as are many other countries.

To keep one's mind open to new ideas is to make progress; and the more open-minded the people in any town, state or country, the more progressive and wealthy is each one of these political units. It is the privilege of each student of retailing to be ever on the alert for new ideas, for new ways of doing things. Just to the extent that those interested in retailing take this attitude, will retailing become scientific in its every detail and hence capable of distributing goods at the lowest possible cost. Justification for the "middleman" can be stated in no more certain terms than this increased efficiency referred to.

## THE INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

Until one hundred and fifty years ago, roughly speaking, production took place in the home. Each family was practically self supporting, producing its own clothing, food and shelter. Only a few articles such as salt, plow shares, etc., were imported from other communities. In this autonomous order of society there was little specialization. This was necessarily so since the demand for any product in a community was limited by the lack of transportation facilities. There were no railroads and for the most part the roads were impassable for heavy traffic. The demand for any product, such as horseshoeing or weaving, was thus limited to the town itself, and whether specialization was developed to any

degree naturally depended upon the size of the town. As specialization means opportunity to do one thing all day year in and year out, it amounts to nothing more or less than expertness.

Expertness was thus a thing unheard of in many communities because society did not demand enough of certain products to justify any one spending his entire time in producing them. Lack of expertness resulted in small quantity and inferior quality production. In other words, goods or wealth could not be produced in large quantities. Another reason for this condition was the universal use of hand tools and machinery. Muscular effort definitely circumscribes results. No great quantity or quality production of wealth could have been produced on the foundations — hand tools and non-specialization. The wonderful present economic welfare of the people in the civilized world is due for the most part to the alteration of these conditions of production, by means of the discovery of a new and great motive power, viz., steam.

With the invention of the steam engine about one hundred and fifty years ago and its many practical applications of recent years, is bound up a great revolution in the methods of producing and transporting goods. People who formerly spun and wove in their homes or in small shops under the supervision of a neighbor, were now brought together in great numbers under one roof called a factory. Each person was set at a single machine where he performed a single operation. Specialization was being realized. Along with the much larger production of goods went the development of steam railways which enabled the exchange of goods between communities, thereby widening the market, i. e., the demand. With the ever increasing facilities of transportation and

communication, people were enabled to specialize in one occupation and receive from elsewhere the many necessities that they formerly produced themselves.

As a direct result of the introduction of specialized and mechanical processes, production increased tremendously, with less hours of work per day. Hours of work fell from fourteen to twelve, then ten, then nine, while at present there are many industries running on an eight-hour day. Recently a movement has started among British labor calling for a six-hour day. This remarkable reduction in working hours has given the working man leisure hours unknown before the last century; and it has tremendously stimulated the production of luxuries to give pleasure during the free hours. These luxuries soon came to be looked upon as necessities that could not be dispensed with without severe hardship. Thus a new standard of living arose which included many things formerly unheard of. The great definiteness of these comparatively new demands has acted like a stimulant to industry and has opened up possibilities for production undreamed of even fifty years ago.

As regards the increased quantity production resulting from the introduction of machine processes, it must be said that not only did hours of labor diminish as production increased but likewise the total number of laborers employed in the industries affected. As a remarkable illustration of this fact is the production of yarn. If the present yearly production of yarn was produced under the old-fashioned hand methods, it would take one hundred billion women spinning ten hours per day. When it is considered that there are only one billion eight hundred million people in the world, the significance of this illustration is seen. Needless to say, per-

haps, this great quantity production, with less labor, has reduced the price of clothing, house furnishings and other articles many thousand fold. The low price of the goods on the retailer's shelves is largely due to the steam engine specialization.

An interesting phase of this remarkable revolution is the attitude that the workers have held toward it. For the most part they opposed it. The hand spinners and weavers who had become quite proficient in their hand processes could not see the ultimate value to mankind of the power spindles and looms, but realized only the immediate handicap under which they were placed. Children could tend the new machines as proficiently as could the older spinners and weavers, and naturally the latter were incensed at the new inventions. Their feeling of antagonism took the popular form of burning factories and smashing machinery wherever this was possible. Only momentarily, however, was progress stopped by these abortions. The new machine processes and the increased specialization produced more goods of a greater variety and at a much lower cost, and because of these all-important results society supported and protected the new processes until they have become a commonplace part of our industrial life. No one at present, not even the workers themselves, would think for a moment of going back to hand production.

Such is the path of progress. Opposition has usually confronted the adoption of new and more efficient methods of production or more advanced scientific ideas. When Galileo declared the earth was round even his scientific contemporaries were astounded that one could be so bold as to attack such a well established doctrine that the earth was flat. His life was threatened unless

he retracted his bold assertion, and in the face of such opposition he temporarily retracted his claim.

Opposition to progressive change, showing the inflexibility of the minds of large classes of people, is further illustrated by the mobbing and beating of Jacquard in Lyons, France, in 1808. Embroidering had been done by hand since the world began and people believed that it must always be done thus. Jacquard developed a wonderful complicated loom that permitted mechanical production of this work. People's minds could not accommodate themselves to the radical change; they could not understand the bold nature who could so set aside precedent and alter a universal method of doing things. But England grasped the idea that France discarded and today a statue of Jacquard stands in Lyons on the spot where this great inventor was persecuted over a century ago.

Another important result of the industrial revolution was the division of society into capitalists, landlords, managers and laborers. Previous to the industrial revolution, when each family was almost self-sufficing, each person combined these four functions in himself. With the enlargement of industry, however, it became necessary for more intense specialization of these functions. For example, it was found that the most efficient manager could be produced only if all of one's time was spent in solving managerial problems. People now had to choose which function they were qualified by nature or training to perform and then spend their entire time becoming experts in their field.

Thus we find society split up into four factors, all working toward a common end, viz., the production and distribution of goods at the least cost. No factor can

produce goods independently of the others. They are all necessary for large scale machine production and are all interdependent. Oftentimes this fact is not clearly seen by all people, resulting in the temporary disarrangement of industry. Sometimes labor thinks itself the all-important factor, and discontent and disturbances result. Coöperative stores and factories are initiated by laborers who have magnified their own importance in the industrial and commercial processes, and minimized the value of capital and management. Usually in this country such movements have met with disaster because of lack of capital and poor management, and workers have lost their earnings. Through bitter experience many laborers have learned that management with ability and foresight is necessary in any business and because of its relative scarcity must be well paid. On the other hand, oftentimes capital or management gets the notion that it is the all-important factor in production and treats unfairly the labor in its employ. In some cases only by governmental action has labor succeeded in forcing capital or management to recognize its rights.

Fortunately, the necessity for specialization of these functions and the relative importance of each in our industrial and commercial system, are becoming more widely recognized among all classes. Employers are becoming more and more willing to see the employes' side of any problem, and vice versa. It is to be hoped that greater mutual understanding between all parties in industry and commerce will eliminate much of the present day antagonism which is the only great handicap to securing greater efficiency and lower costs.

Second in statement, but scarcely inferior in importance, is the great revolution in agricultural methods

taking place within the last century. Since grain was first grown hand methods have been used. The scythe and sickle cut the grain, the raking and binding were done by hand and the grain was threshed by a hand-swung flail. Under such a system much labor was needed for a small production and costs were necessarily high. With the introduction of mowers, reapers and binders, stimulated by the scarcity of help during the Civil War, a new era of agriculture was at hand. Less workers on the farms could now produce the usual crops large enough to take care of this country's demands, as well as a surplus for export. An illustration of the tremendous release of men for other occupations caused by the introduction of agricultural machinery, is seen in wheat production. Before 1890, in order to produce the present wheat crop (1918) it would have taken 11,000,000 men working ten hours a day, while after this date the 1918 wheat crop could have been produced by 500,000 men — a saving of the labor of 10,500,000 men on one grain crop alone. If all the crops were considered, the saving in labor power would be most startling. In the light of these figures the "back to the country" movement appears somewhat ridiculous. If less men can produce enough grain to satisfy our needs why employ more men? Rather, it is to the advantage of the farmer as well as of all society to have the men who are released from agriculture by means of machinery, migrate to the cities or elsewhere and manufacture the new luxuries that are increasingly in demand as the prosperity of the country population becomes assured.

Our farmers adopted agricultural machinery because of necessity, but once adopted it has remained; while other operations on the farm have gradually been taken

over by mechanical processes. Open-mindedness, to a large extent, is the reason for the ready adoption of these labor saving devices. China is still plowing with the crooked stick, and efforts to introduce Western machinery have been of little avail. Habits of thinking and doing have been fixed by too many centuries of unchanging methods to be altered in a generation or two. Only by the most persistent efforts are backward countries made to adopt new ideas and new methods and then it is usually accomplished by the example of progressive foreigners. The result of new ideas is illustrated no better than in agricultural development in the United States; and the stagnation and meager production due to inflexibility of mind and inability to change from old to new methods, is no more clearly seen than in the production of agricultural products in the Far East and other backward countries and states.

### THE NEW PHILOSOPHY OF RETAIL MERCHANDISING

Like manufacturing, transportation and agriculture, retailing has been revolutionized in the last century and a half. From time immemorial the retailer, trader or shopkeeper has been held in low esteem by his fellowman. Throughout English history the unscrupulous cunning of the shopkeeper seems to have been a byword. The trader was believed to be a man who produced no wealth whatsoever, but gained an illegitimate living by adding to the price of goods that he received from some one else. In other words, he was not economically justified. Neither was he socially justified. It was commonly believed that he sought to sell goods to the disadvantage of the buyer. *Caveat emptor* (let the buyer beware) was the ruling business ethics of the time, but this fact

did not lessen the suspicion that the customer held toward the shopkeeper. The buyer was necessarily always on his guard when dealing with retailers, and this antagonistic attitude of the buying public has only been partially dissipated within recent years for reasons that will be mentioned.

The reason for the existence of the shopkeeper not being justified economically was a false view of what was meant by the "production of wealth." The Physiocrats believed that agriculture was the only productive industry from which all other trades and occupations received their energy. Later on, it was generally conceded that manufacturing was productive of wealth, but reluctance was shown in granting this function to retail merchandising. Transportation was held in the same light as retailing. But in the last century it became clear to many people that industries or persons were producers of wealth if they satisfied some want, i. e., produced some utility. It was seen that corn is not "produced" in the completest meaning of the word until it is in the hands of the consumer, since the only object of its "production" is to supply the demands of consumers. Hence the railroad and other transportation agencies must function in the production process and add *place* utilities to the articles transported. Then in order to get the goods into the hands of the consumer, specialized agencies must be employed to effect a change in ownership of the goods. Exchangers, traders or shopkeepers were seen to add *ownership* utilities to goods. So to the fundamental or *substance* utilities added to an article by agriculture, mining or lumbering, are added *form* utilities by manufacturers, *place* utilities by transportation agencies and *ownership* utilities by merchants.

It may seem that such an analysis as this is superfluous, but one does not have to go far even today to find strong traces of the old fallacy, viz., that the retailer is not productive. However it must be said that, for the most part, society today justifies the existence of the retailer from an economic standpoint.

Economic justification for the existence of retailers came much earlier than did social recognition, the former being quite well accepted by the beginning of the last century while the latter can only be said to have come into being in the last generation. This applies, for the most part, to the United States and some parts of England, Germany and France, since the rest of the world withholds social recognition from the retailer even at the present time.

Why has society held a depreciated idea of the retailer *socially* when he was contemporaneously held as a vital economic factor in production? This has been true because of the methods employed by retailers and because of a vicious economic fallacy regarding the nature of exchange.

The old methods of retailing merchandise followed the principle of " charging what the traffic would bear," i. e., asking different prices for the same article from different customers. Today this system is common in some parts of Europe and Asia and partially accounts for the social position of the shopkeeper. Buying under this system developed into a struggle between seller and buyer. The two parties were antagonists. The buyer was forced to be on the qui vive at all times in order to get the best of the bargain, or, if this was impossible, as it usually was, then it devolved upon the customer to acquire the goods at the least loss to himself. Such meth-

ods capitalized the weaknesses of the buyers to the gain of the sellers. The necessaries of life could only be extracted at a fair price from these vendors by means of shrewdness, cajolery, threats and higgling. It was only natural that society held no honored place for producers who secured a living by taking advantage of the weaker bargaining ability of others.

The second reason for this social attitude toward retailers was the existence, in both the minds of traders and customers, of a false idea of the meaning of exchange. It was commonly held until the last century that only one party to an exchange could be benefited thereby — that one party of necessity must be the loser. This theory led to the practice described heretofore. Each party endeavored to be the winner at any odds, since it was the belief there could be only one.

Economists gave to the retailer justification for his economic existence, but it took many sturdy pioneers in retail merchandising to place the retailer of the United States on the high social level where he deserves to be, and which he is fast attaining. One creator of the new era in retail merchandising was John Wanamaker who in 1876 adopted the "one price" system in his large store the "Grand Depot" in Philadelphia, and thereby helped to overthrow the earlier practice of "bargaining" and the vicious economic fallacy that supported it.

Not only this. He instituted other new merchandising methods which, together with progressive methods used by merchants in other parts of the country, were to revolutionize retailing in the United States and abroad, just as much as production in this country was given a great impetus by the industrial revolution in England.

In the first place, no customer was to be strongly urged to buy. This meant the elimination of the "barker" who was then a familiar sight on the sidewalk before every retail store, and it also meant discontinuance of the custom among salespeople to "load" a customer with as much goods as possible before she could get out of the store.

In the second place, the goods were what they were represented — they were genuine. Seconds were marked seconds even if they were not obviously recognized as such. *Caveat emptor* had received its first severe blow. The burden of recognizing deceit was no longer thrown onto the shoulders of the customer. She did not have to be on her guard, hence "shopping" became somewhat of a pleasure where it had formerly been a combat to be dreaded for its possible consequences.

In the third place, money would be returned if customers were dissatisfied. Competitors of John Wanamaker predicted that if all other innovations failed to bring about defeat, this particular policy would bring disaster. "The public will swindle your eyes out," they said, believing the public dishonest and unfair. Needless to say, the public met this declaration of confidence in its integrity with a high resolve to be worthy of it, and the success of this policy has been demonstrated by its wide adoption since that time.

In the fourth place, honorable relations must at all times exist between buyer and seller regardless of the economic or social status of the former. War between the two was at an end. Henceforth, it became the function of the retailer to coöperate with the customer in securing to the latter goods at a fair price rather than

competing with her with the aim of trying to get the best of her. The interests of buyer and seller were recognized as mutual.

The struggle that this and other advocates of the new philosophy of retail merchandising underwent with their competitors is a story in and of itself. Mankind has always scoffed at the inventor, whether of things or ideas, and men in 1876 were no exception. Some merchants even attempted to pass laws to eliminate what they considered "unfair" competition; as the progress of others in all ages has appeared "unfair" to those less capable of achievement. Similar indeed was the attitude of textile workers towards the introduction of power looms in England during the industrial revolution, when the new power machinery was smashed and factories destroyed. But like all revolutions that introduce better and more efficient methods of producing wealth, the industrial and retail revolutions were productive of permanent results. No one thinks of the far-reaching effects of the present methods of retailing because they have become common, but to these must be attributed the present social status of the retailer. Confidence of the public in those with whom they have business dealings is necessarily a plant of slow growth, not only because of tradition but because of the frailty of human nature. Steady observance of the methods adopted by Wanamaker, Field and other progressive merchants is the only sure means of securing efficient merchandising from the standpoint not only of the public but the merchant as well, besides placing retailing on a social equality with the other professions.

In this revolution of retailing methods some people have seen a new *control* established which the facts do not

justify. It is the belief of many that competition has miserably failed as a selective and controlling factor in retail merchandising and must be replaced by coöperation. Nothing that has transpired in this field would warrant such an assumption. Coöperation has not *displaced* competition; it has merely *supplemented* it. Recognition on the part of retailers of certain vital characteristics of human nature, and the energy of leaders to enforce this recognition on others, have *raised the plane of competition* and placed it on a new level. Standards of competition are now elevated and hedged about with new rules which are enforced *by* competition. Thus it has always been. New ideas compete with old ones and displace them, and are maintained by the energy liberated by their own activity. More and more the leaders in the field of retailing are recognizing the newer and more far-reaching demands of the public. Merchants are realizing that consumers are demanding experts in retailing who know their goods, understand in what situations they have the greatest utility and when they are the most effective. In other words, progressives in merchandising methods are objective thinkers and are endeavoring to give the service such as a higher educated public is requiring. Methods and policies adequate to meet the new requirements will become the possession of a few, and public opinion will enforce the ideas of the few on the many who serve the public in the capacity of retail merchants. What many of these new requirements are will be taken up in the following pages.

Not only has the attitude of retailers toward customers changed in the last generation, but almost within the last decade, in the larger towns, retailers have changed

their attitude toward the community itself; and this change in attitude, which is rapidly percolating into the smaller towns as well, is pregnant with a new life and energy for American communities that cannot be overestimated in its influence on our national life.

From their very origin, our communities have been individualistic in character. That such should be true cannot be considered strange when it is realized that many of the towns in the Middle West are of still recent origin and contain pioneers or their children who have succeeded in creating a new world from the bare land itself. All the characteristics of self-sufficiency found in these world builders are reflected in the worlds they have built. Each citizen has tended more or less to live unto himself. Each retailer has had a conception of his business as a unit separate from that of his competitor and from the town that included both. The theory of wealth-getting in retailing was known to all and well practiced. In short, it amounts to this: "Anything that helps my competitor injures me, and anything that helps me injures my competitor."

According to this policy, if one store was more up-to-date, had better salespeople and a better organization than another, this store would gain by maintaining such a situation. Hence, if new methods of store accounting, or ideas to further better selling, advertising or window decorating, became known to one merchant, he was careful to profit by them *and keep them secret.* Each retailer believed that he could progress further the more backward his competitors remained. Each merchant tried to climb to success over the dead body of his opponent.

Many examples could be given illustrating to what

extreme lengths this practice has been carried in the Middle West. Merchants have closely guarded their methods of doing business, their prices (wherever possible), their overhead expenses, gross sales, methods of accounting, etc.; competitors have "knocked" each other to customers and friends; enemies have been developed among unsuspecting third parties; school-boards and town officials have been influenced, and, sad to relate, even the church in some cases has become involved. Only to one who has made a study of many small communities can the results coming from this theory of doing retail business have its full meaning.

That such practices are as foolish and the theory back of them as fallacious as the theories and practices of merchants prior to 1876, no one after a little thought will deny. The practice resulting from the belief that the backwardness of one merchant was beneficial to other merchants has meant much loss to the retailers who believed it, to others less guilty and, most of all, to the welfare of the community itself.

This was necessarily true because little community progress could result without healthy business activity and the latter was fatally throttled at its very inception by a policy that effectively maintained and aided retail inefficiency. Towns received the reputation of being "dead" and the existence of even one progressive retailer in each line could not successfully change public opinion. People from the surrounding country likely as not got into the unprogressive stores, were not treated kindly or failed to find the goods they desired and went over to the mail order house where courtesy is a slogan and variety of goods and reasonable price a reality. Thus trade left town and failed to come into town because of a false

theory regarding the relation of the retailer to his competitors and the community.

A new realization of the retailer's function in the community is rapidly being realized. This is evidenced by the number of so-called community clubs that are now being organized, where formerly the commercial club seemed to be considered adequate to deal with business problems. The former organizations are attempting to promulgate new methods of merchandising among backward merchants in the community; to study defective business methods in use and gather information as to their remedy; to conduct short courses for business men where so-called business "secrets" can become the property of all and where experts in merchandising can tell practitioners what they know; and finally to place the farmer on the same basis as the business man and make him realize that he is a part of the community and not outside of it. In these meetings competitors rub elbows, gather information that is mutually helpful and learn to know one another as men — not as enemies (competitors).

Through such and similar efforts the old business fallacies are being relegated to the background. It is being realized that a policy which helps to keep any producers in the community in a backward position is injuring the community, and that anything that injures the community is, in the long run, a bad thing for every one, notwithstanding the fact that some merchants may possibly be immediately benefited. The community view has been broadened, and the business view has had to develop itself contemporaneously.

This widening of business vision, this endeavor of retailers to coöperate in order to raise the plane of competition, is a development that is going on at the present

time. Only the more progressive towns in the more progressive states have been affected, but the movement must eventually become universal, resulting in a new life for our towns and a rejuvenation of our country districts.

## THE MODERN EFFICIENCY MOVEMENT

As already indicated, much has been done in the last one hundred and fifty years to develop machine processes. In fact it is no exaggeration to say that more has been done in the last century and a half in the development of machine production than was done in the previous seven thousand years. Progress has been made in this field because effort has continuously been directed toward this direction, and it is well that this has been done. Nevertheless, the struggle to perfect machinery in manufacturing, agriculture, mining and transportation, has tended to overemphasize the mechanical element in industry as compared to another element not so tangible but equally important. This element is human nature.

Only within the last two decades has anything of importance been done toward the development of this vast field, and as yet only a beginning has been made. Yet from the results already accomplished it may not be too much to say that with a century and a half of irrigation and development this field will exhibit possibilities as yet undreamed of. At any rate, no matter what the future may hold in store for those industries developing and refining human processes, what has already been done is most worthy of notice. In this brief discussion space permits mention of only three of the most prominent achievements in age-old occupations.

Bricklaying, every one will concede, is one of the oldest occupations. The earliest buildings were made of brick,

and pictures of bricklaying are found in the ruins of Egypt. To set about improving the human processes in this field seemed a waste of time to many people, and especially to the bricklayers themselves who had learned to lay brick as tradition dictated. It had been done in a certain way for many centuries so why should a change be made, said the workers. In reality this reason, although it sounded plausible to some, was no reason at all. Yet this kind of argument has always prevented change and hindered progress and at present is the greatest foe to the improvement of human processes. As workers have always opposed the introduction of machine processes, so they have always opposed the changing of human processes; and progress has only been effected in some countries because the leaders have been open-minded enough to give new ideas a trial. Wherever these trials have been rewarded with success the masses have reluctantly adopted the new methods on being convinced of their desirability; but obviously in those countries where new ideas will not be put on trial no adoption of them can ever come. In such a condition is China.

Notwithstanding the opposition of the bricklayers, bricklaying underwent an intensive study. The laying of bricks was watched by keen observers and was deliberated on as intently as any subtle ideas in religion or philosophy have been. To make a long story short, it was found that in laying one brick an average of sixteen movements were made. Using the more skilled and intelligent workmen as subjects for experiments, it was found that the average number of movements in laying one brick could be reduced to five — an increase in efficiency of over three hundred per cent.

To many it would seem that this remarkable achieve-

ment would *immediately* revolutionize bricklaying in the United States. Unfortunately, because of mankind's tendency to persist in doing things as they have been accustomed to do them, such is not the case. Gradually, however, this improvement in human process will widen its influence and set the standards for bricklaying.

When this much desired consummation is a fact the significance of its effects can scarcely be estimated. If brick buildings can be built at one-half or even one-third of the former labor cost, the price of such buildings must fall. If such buildings are cheaper, rents fall, overhead expenses in retail stores become less, hence goods can be sold at a lower price. Consumers (and all people are consumers, including the bricklayers themselves) would benefit by such a change in hand processes, while the probabilities are that the wages of bricklayers would be higher. This seems likely because those bricklayers capable of organizing their work on the basis of the new processes would be limited in supply but greatly in demand. Those bricklayers who could not adapt themselves to the new conditions would obviously have to seek a new trade for which they were better adapted. This necessity, however, could result in only temporary hardship, since their productivity in work for which they were better adapted would be greater and hence their wages would be higher. It is a fundamental principle of economics that everybody ultimately benefits because of the introduction into industry or commerce of labor saving processes. Only *immediately* does the opposite sometimes appear to be true.

A second example of increasing the efficiency of the human element is seen in the experiments conducted by F. W. Taylor among the pig iron carriers at the Bethle-

hem Steel Works. The work of these laborers consisted of picking up iron pigs from piles and carrying them to flat cars where they were deposited in stacks. Each laborer could load an average of 16 tons per day. After three years of observing this human process at work, Mr. Taylor devised more scientific handling which increased the average man's carrying capacity per day to 40 tons. Formerly the laborers received $1.15 per day, while after the new human processes were worked out the men who would follow instructions received $1.85 per day. Strange to say, the men who carried 40 tons by means of the new scientific methods were less fatigued at the end of the day's work than formerly.

How such startling results were secured can be ascertained elsewhere.[1] In passing, it may be said that rest periods were introduced at different times during the day so that bodily energy was conserved throughout the entire day's work. Several important studies in the relation of work to fatigue have been made, an investigation of which will well repay those interested in this important phase of industrial efficiency. There is no doubt that this field has been little more than touched in its possibilities, especially as regards retailing.

The third illustration of effectively altering old hand processes in order to secure increased efficiency is the work of shoveling. Most people are willing to admit that if such an apparently simple and commonplace operation as shoveling can be altered along scientific lines, *most any human process has possibilities for development.* It is to impress upon the reader this all important fact that these instances of scientific development are given.

By experimenting with different size shovels for differ-

[1] F. W. Taylor "Principles of Scientific Management."

ent kinds of material, by carefully noting the results secured in throwing the shovel load different distances, as well as observing the manner in which the shovel was handled, the efficiency of shovelers was increased three hundred per cent. A full account of the manner in which these experiments were conducted and the results obtained can be found elsewhere.[1] For the purposes of this lesson enough has been said if the reader realizes the great revolution that is now going on in human processes.

That great opportunities for bettering retail selling methods exist everywhere, very few observers of retail conditions will deny. Yet there are many salespeople and retailers who have become accustomed to certain ways of selling goods and handling customers, which are fundamentally wrong, but which are fixed in operation by habit and are apparently difficult to get away from. The old way is very often thought to be the best way. Experience has produced certain methods that have brought fair success and there is a feeling of "let well enough alone."

Needless to say, if old methods were continuously followed regardless of changing conditions, no progress could be made. Generation after generation would become fixed in their thought, and mental and industrial stagnation would result. The hope of present day industry and commerce is that the leaders, the thinkers, will make a careful study of present day retail selling methods and change their old ways of doing things whenever these old ways are found to be defective or inferior to new methods in getting results. The slogan of the business world is, "get results," and if the methods described in this book are tried and found to be the "result-getting

[1] *Ibid.*

kind," their justification will be assured. It is only fair to them to say that they have already been through the crucible of experiment and from practical application have been found to be conducive to increased efficiency in selling. Many large stores have put the ideas herein described into practice and are realizing increased sales therefrom.

The mechanics of retail stores has been well advanced; methods of window display, lighting, heating, store arrangement, fixtures and all other details of the store equipment have been given a great deal of careful thought looking toward greater efficiency, and they have reaped big returns. As yet, little has been done with the human element, the salesperson; and it is with the hope of stimulating interest and pointing out methods of betterment in this important field that this book on salesmanship is offered to the public.

## CHAPTER II

## KNOWING THE GOODS

The present revolution in retailing is the substitution of experts for inexperts behind the counter. Specialization, spoken of in the previous chapter, is of little value to society unless expertness results wherever it is practiced. Especially in the department store is specialization carried to a fine degree. Salespeople sell only in one department; they handle at the most only a few lines of goods; they have the opportunity to know all about the things that they are handling every day. If they are inexpert, society has lost because of the opportunity that has not been utilized.

Not only because of the opportunity offered for specialization should salespeople be experts. Another reason is the ever increasing complexity of goods as regards their quality and construction. Not long ago it was possible for the customer to be an expert buyer and hence there was no great necessity to have expert sellers. With the manufacture of numberless products and substitutes unheard of a few years ago, together with trade names whose number is legion, the possibility of the customer knowing what is in the goods and how they are made is fast disappearing. Many examples to illustrate this fact could be given. One case is that of congoleum. The name does not describe the goods and the makeup of the latter is unknown to many people. That it is merely tar

paper painted on both sides, some customers would be surprised to know. Yet knowledge of this fact would not reduce sales, because the wearing qualities of this product are well known. Linoleum is now made with cork, wood fiber or rag fiber filling. Yet linoleum is only linoleum to some customers. Again, fiber silks are becoming so numerous and are made up in so many kinds of goods that the customer is lost in the rapidity of change and the complexity of construction. Leathers can only be distinguished by an expert and that expert cannot be the average customer. More and more the latter is seeking out those stores where she can trust the salespeople to *know* what they are selling. If neither the salesperson nor the customer know the composition of the goods much opportunity for dissatisfaction arises. It is to prevent dissatisfaction that expertness in selling is advocated.

Not only do changing conditions make it imperative that the salesperson become an expert in her field, but they likewise make it necessary for the salesperson to be an *adviser*. The stores that can give expert advice are the stores that will have a big following in the future. As an example of the need for this service is a case called to the attention of the writer a short time ago in a men's furnishings store. The salesperson tactfully explained to a well dressed young man the correct way to tie a four-in-hand tie. He likewise explained how to match ties with shirts and shirts with suits. The advice was given in such a clever way that the customer was delighted with his purchase because he knew *why* it was sold him, while his respect for the store was distinctly heightened.

Willingness to advise should never exist without ability to advise, as is indicated by the case of the inexpert salesperson who offered a stout woman a shirtwaist with

horizontal stripes. If expert advice had been given to customers, many of the absurdities in dress and clash of color designs which are seen on the streets every day would not be in evidence. A study of harmony of colors and fitness of dress to different personalities would not only yield big returns to the salespeople making it, but it would yield a pleasure of accomplishment the value of which could not be accurately measured in terms of money. Not only does dress offer a large field for such a study but also household decoration and other lines.

The first step toward becoming an expert in retail selling is knowledge of the goods. This knowledge is necessary for four reasons, the chief of which has for the most part been overlooked in the books on retail salesmanship and in retail store educational work. It is a purely selfish reason, which fact may be in its favor since most of our actions are based on selfish motives. The first reason why a salesperson should know all about the goods is because such *knowledge takes the drudgery out of work.* So long as work is irksome and monotonous little progress can be made. The most successful in any field of endeavor are those who have the ability to make their work play; those who see the significance of their work in present day industry; salespeople who love their goods because they know their history and the difficulties experienced in getting them before the public. To know about anything worth while is to become enthusiastic about it. Enthusiasm is the white heat of conviction and without it the customer cannot be convinced. Selling without enthusiasm is selling under a handicap. Yet this invaluable quality of salespeople can only be secured through knowing all about the goods they are handling.

No one ever became enthusiastic about something regarding which little or nothing was known. Is the reader enthusiastic about Persia? Certainly not unless its wonderful accomplishments and achievements are fully realized. To what extent is one enthusiastic about the great Theodore Roosevelt? Only to the degree that one knows him from reading his books or reading about him. The reading of his biography would make most people enthusiastic for this typical American. Does one's heart beat a little faster when the Stars and Stripes are unfurled? Not unless it is known for what this emblem stands and to what victories it has led our troops. One who has read United States history usually has a much more intense interest in the United States.

Not only does what has been said apply to countries and men, but it applies equally to commodities for sale. Is the salesperson vitally interested in the beautiful silks that she is handling every day? She is interested only to the extent of her knowledge. To know how silk was first produced by the Chinese and the secret of its production kept from western Europe for five thousand years; how Justinian, Emperor of Rome, induced two monks to go to China and while there, under penalty of death if their purpose became known, ascertain the process of making silk and bring back in their hollow bamboo canes several hundred of the silk-worm eggs; how these eggs stolen from the Chinese were the beginning of the silk industry in Europe; and how later the United States learned all that Europe knew about producing silks and improved upon them, becoming at present the greatest producer of silks in the world; to know all this fascinating history and much more is to create a foundation for interest in what one is selling that will later develop into enthusi-

asm and become the background of a convincing sales-talk.

Or, in selling corsets, it might be interesting to know that this piece of wearing apparel was known and in use as far back as the time of Cleopatra (69–30 B. C.), while even in Homer's time woman had begun to learn the art of emphasizing the pleasing outlines of her figure; that after Cæsar's time (100–44 B. C.) for twelve centuries the evolution of the corset lagged, only a sort of tightly wound bandage being used; that in the 12th Century, under the reign of Louis VI of France, the "natural figure" notion was discarded and an arrangement resembling the modern corset appeared, only it was worn outside the dress; that during the next three centuries corset wearing became such a fad that even men wore them; that in the 15th Century wooden corsets came into vogue giving the wearer a tapering appearance from the shoulders to the waist; that during the reign of Catherine de Medici of France, no woman in her court could find favor in her eyes whose waist measure exceeded thirteen inches; that in order to reduce the waist measure to this figure corsets were laced by serving men while in some cases the figure was placed in a steel cage or corset frame which held the victim's body in a vise-like and perfectly rigid grip; that the death rate increased among the women due to this custom, and finally, Henry IV of France stamped out the injurious fashion by an imperial order. Nevertheless, the order was evaded by wearing steels in the sides of dresses and after the death of Henry IV the practice of wearing corsets broke out in real earnest and became general among the poorer classes as well as among the nobility and wealthy. Fortunately the corset has never been developed back into such extreme lines

as existed during the reign of Catherine de Medici. How it has changed from year to year and evolved until the present time is interesting. The salesperson who sells anything, no matter what it is, and does not know its history, is overlooking one of the most vital elements in making her enthusiastic over what she is daily handling; and such ignorance is preventing her from becoming an expert in her line.

Every article has a history. Shoes, felt, celluloid, umbrellas, stockings, hats, pins, shovels, carpets, furniture, stoves, musical instruments, underwear, jewelry, stationery, and many more commodities of everyday consumption have a story connected with them. Not to know this story is to be an isolated link in the chain of the productive process. But, on the other hand, to see the past of an article is often the only clear way to comprehend its present and future. At any rate, enthusiasm can only flourish in the soil of knowledge, and the history of any article is a certain kind of knowledge.

Often the history of a commodity discloses a *sentimental value* which, if communicated to the customer, enhances the real value of the article. For instance, the design of oriental rugs is the expression of some sentiment of the weaver. To know the nature of this sentiment is to see something in the rug that otherwise would remain unknown. In other words, it is a *different* rug after its design has been explained and hence it is more valuable. If the rug is *made* more valuable, customers will more readily buy and be willing to pay higher prices. It must be remembered that customers do not buy goods; they buy *qualities* — what they see in goods. Linens, tapestries, furniture and many other articles have a senti-

mental value. This value should be capitalized in sales talks.

The second reason for the necessity of knowing all about the goods one is selling is that such *knowledge creates self-confidence* in the salesperson, which in turn is transmitted to the customer and reflected in the latter's confidence in the salesperson and her goods. All business relationships are based on confidence, and anything that tends to build up this invaluable asset should be encouraged and developed.

Knowledge necessary to attain this result does not include merely the history and sentimental value of the goods but also their purpose, construction, style and finish. With all this information in the background of one's mind, a certain confidence in one's ability to sell is secured that instantly is reflected in the salesperson's attitude and is recognized by customers.

On asking a shoe salesperson why she did not know about the construction of shoes, she replied, "What's the use? Nobody ever asks those questions anyway." Unfortunately this attitude among salespeople is only too common. They seem to think that because no one asks for this knowledge there is no use acquiring it. It would be just as sensible to say, "What is the value of being well bred? No one ever asks me whether I am or not." The point is that people know whether or not people are well bred without asking them; and for the same reason they know whether a salesperson knows all about her goods or whether a few superficial facts constitute her entire knowledge. And why do people know? Because they can see. A salesperson with a wide knowledge of her goods acts differently and looks differently from one with a superficial knowledge. Knowing about anything

reacts in a subtle way on the personality and leaves its impress. No doubt the reader has sometimes *felt* while buying that a certain salesperson could answer any question that might be asked. Perhaps you did not ask more than one or two questions and perhaps much knowledge was not volunteered because it was felt that you did not desire it, but the point to be noted is, you had confidence in the salesperson and admired her.

Telling all that one knows about the goods is not salesmanship. *Salesmanship is telling what the customer wants to know.* Anything more than this is superfluous. The salesperson may say, "How can one tell when the customer has secured all she wants to know?" The answer is by watching her closely for signs of uneasiness. So long as a customer is interested she shows it, and when she is not, such fact is equally evident. It should be remembered that many a sale has been lost because of too much talk. How to regulate the length of one's sales talk to meet the individual peculiarities of different customers is taken up more fully in a later chapter.[1]

The third reason why a salesperson should know all about the goods is because *the more knowledge possessed, the easier it is to give information* if it is called for. Many an embarrassing situation never would have occurred if the salesperson had known her goods, while ill-will toward the store has often resulted from inability to explain the "why" of the merchandise. Recently a woman came into a dry goods store and picked up some piece goods. "Is this all linen?" she asked. "I think it is," replied the salesperson. "Don't you know?" inquired the customer, irritably. The salesperson had to confess her ignorance, whereupon the customer an-

[1] Chap. V.

grily left the store. This one instance of inefficiency and incapacity to sell service as well as goods lost this store three customers, this lady and two of her friends.

Hundreds of cases are known to the writer where disgusted and dissatisfied customers have been manufactured by stores employing salespeople ignorant of the goods they were selling. Suffice it to give an instance or two in addition to the one already given. A customer was looking at two pairs of gloves; one was $2.00 the other $2.50. They looked so much alike that the customer was at a loss to know the reason for the difference in price, and since the salesperson did not volunteer this information the customer inquired, "Why is one pair higher priced than the other?" The salesperson did some intensive thinking for a few seconds, while resting first on one foot then on the other. Finally, her face lit up as her mind conjured a reason, and she answered, "I guess it is because they are marked that way." Perhaps most customers should have been satisfied with such a logical and comprehensive answer but this customer was not. She lost confidence in the store and even went so far as to tell her friends that this store was dishonest, that it was selling the same article at two different prices. The loss to this store resulting from the ignorance of the salesperson would easily have paid for a liberal course of instruction in salesmanship for the entire store force.

The writer had an experience similar to the one just noted when he asked a piano dealer why the tone of a certain piano was much clearer than that of another one. The retailer replied, "That piano *ought* to be better; it's higher priced." He did not tell why the tone was better. The price evidently could not make the tone, but he apparently did not realize that all-important fact.

The last two instances brings us to an important principle in selling. *It is easier to sell a high priced article if a reason is given for the price, than it is to sell a low priced article if no reason for the price is given.* Many cases could be given to substantiate this principle. People are willing to pay higher prices for goods if they know that they are getting greater value. Thus, if the salesperson selling gloves had explained that the leather in the higher priced gloves had been put through a special process of tanning, utilizing eggs, alum, flour and other articles, which made the leather more flexible and durable; and if she had explained that they were hand sewed instead of machine stitched, very few people would have hesitated to buy the higher priced article. But without a *reason* people prefer not to pay high prices.

The great opportunity today in most stores is not so much to sell more goods to each person, or to secure more customers, but it is to sell higher priced goods to the present clientele. A larger *volume* of sales is more desirable from the store's standpoint than is a greater *number* of sales, while from the standpoint of the customer greater satisfaction usually results from the purchase of more durable goods.

That this is true becomes apparent after a little reflection. During the sale the price looms large and a high grade of salesmanship is required to minimize its importance and make prominent the quality element. But unless this is done immediate peace of mind is purchased at the expense of future satisfactions. After the merchandise has been used awhile the price paid loses its significance, and other factors such as quality and ability to serve come into prominence. If the merchandise is satisfactory in every way the customer is pleased

and the price is forgotten. But if the goods do not give satisfactory service they are condemned and the store that sold them; and in this case also the price is a matter of the past and does not figure to any extent in tempering condemnation. In other words, if an article satisfies completely a customer's needs the latter will not reason that it is doing no more than it should do because a high price was paid for it. She will praise the store for giving her something good. On the other hand, if an article does not come up to expectations the customer will not realize that the price paid was low. She will condemn it and hold ill will toward the store that sold it. Present satisfactions are more vivid than the former feeling of reluctance to pay a high price, while present dissatisfactions more than outweigh any peace of mind that may have been secured previously on account of the unformidable appearance of the price factor. Lasting satisfactions should be sold, not merely immediate composure.

To be able to answer all questions promptly, concisely and yet thoroughly, results from knowing all about the goods. Not more than one customer in ten or perhaps not more than one in fifty will ask intricate questions about construction, etc., but the time spent in acquiring knowledge is indeed well spent if it enables adequate and satisfying answers to be given to those who do call for them. For it must always be remembered that it is usually not only one customer that is driven away when dissatisfaction with the salesperson's service arises, but often many. There is no end to the harm that may result from the lack of a horseshoe nail.

The fourth reason for *the need of intimate stock knowledge is to provide material for the sales talk* and especially to insure "clinchers" for the closing of the

sale. In observing retail selling the writer has often seen the salesperson reach for the price tag and then lean back waiting for the customer to form a buying judgment. Price is always brought to the front when selling points are lacking. However, if salespeople would reflect on the reasons for the failure to purchase they would bump against the fact that price means nothing in and of itself. Only when *reasons* for price are given is the statement of price effective.

Likewise, if the workings of the human mind were understood much of the present laxity would disappear. The human mind must be led through four distinct stages before any sale can be made: the *attention* of the customer must be secured, her *interest* aroused, a *desire* for the article created, and finally, these three must be crystallized into *resolve* — decision to buy. When the goods are first shown it cannot be said that more than the attention of the customer has been secured. Her mind cannot pass through the three remaining stages unless it is *led* and *directed* through them. Merely stating the price is certainly doing no more than to arouse some interest in the article. To create desire and secure resolve to buy requires a *selling talk* carefully worked out and cumulative in its effect. How salespeople expect the human mind to form a resolve without *reasons* for such a resolve is one of the mysteries of present day methods of retail selling. "Waiting for customers to buy" is too common a practice in stores. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that customers only too often "wait" to get some information on which they can base a logical buying judgment. If they do buy without receiving this information it is usually because they have sold themselves, i. e., *in spite of* the salesperson. In

such cases the store employe cannot accurately be called a salesperson but an "order-taker." She has taken an order for goods which the customer sorely desired (or they would not have been purchased) but she has not *sold* them. Order-takers are relatively common and therefore command only low wages, while salespeople (i. e., those who induce or persuade people to buy goods because of information given) are scarce and therefore are extremely valuable.

Lack of knowledge of goods is often evidenced by the excessive use of certain terms such as "nifty," "swell," "classy," "great," "fine," or by the use of superlatives. Usually these are thrown at the buyer of ready-to-wear clothing. Because of their commonplace character and lack of definiteness they make no impression on the customer unless it be an unfavorable one. Most store managers are seeking out all sorts of ways of making their store distinctive, yet strange to say they permit the use of sales language that has unfortunately become universal in its usage and meaningless in its application.

The use of such terms or superlatives not only indicates lack of definite information about the goods but it also denotes lack of a vocabulary. Where this is the case a study of the dictionary will produce remarkable results. Equivalents of common terms will be found intelligible and practical for use in sales talks. The newness and freshness of the salesperson's language will immediately attract the customer's attention and convey correctly and forcefully the ideas which they represent. A great opportunity for increasing selling efficiency lies in improving the vocabulary of the sales talk and discarding dead words that have long since ceased to convey ideas. To allow these formerly useful but now out-of-date convey-

ances of ideas to persist is as ridiculous as to ride in ox-carts instead of in automobiles. Ideas are of little value unless they can be transmitted vigorously and intelligibly to the customer. Usually a broad knowledge of the goods will provide the vocabulary needed for an effective selling talk.

A final reason why the goods should be described carefully and thoroughly (unless the customer shows impatience) is because *people do not see what they look at;* they only see that which is pointed out to them. There is no more important truth applicable to retailing. The average salesperson takes too much for granted. It is assumed that when the customer is looking at the goods the latter sees what it is intended she should. Only too often this is not true. The customer overlooks the important elements of value that the salesperson takes for granted are obvious, and her mind rests on objections that prevent her from buying. A decision is made *independently* of the salesperson when it should only have been made with her help.

In order to confirm this important principle, the writer has carried on some experiments with customers in order to ascertain the number and strength of the impressions made on them when looking at goods. The number and strength of impressions made on different people by any article varies widely. Some people are keen observers and often see detail that escapes the view of others. Very few people, perhaps no one, sees all the important aspects of anything without having previously studied it or without having them pointed out. A sunset holds a different meaning for different people because different things are seen although only one object is looked at. The real sunset with its delicately blending tints can

never be seen and appreciated by some people without help from the more observant. Looking is not necessarily seeing. Usually it is not.

The writer has watched a salesperson try to sell a hammer. The hammer was described as being "good," "an excellent value," as able to "give satisfaction," and as being greatly "in demand." It seemed superfluous to the salesperson to go further. The customer hesitated for some time turning the hammer over in his hands, and finally left the store with the statement, "I guess I'll see about this later." The salesperson when asked why he did not describe the different features of the hammer, laughed and said, "What's the use of telling him what anybody with half an eye can see?" The reply that many customers only had "quarter eyes," apparently did not reach him.

Because of this incident the writer has been in hundreds of stores observing sales. In only isolated cases have the salespeople realized the principle that people do not see what they look at. The features of goods of all kinds (furniture, clothing or kitchenware) are supposed to speak for themselves. Unfortunately for many salespeople they fail to do this. The customer sees something other than the salesperson sees or wants her to see, and features of prime importance go unobserved.

The mail order houses realize this principle and describe carefully even the smaller and more insignificant goods. Regarding a hammer, one company describes seven important features: "Full nickel plated, mahogany finished handles. Forged from crucible cast steel. Faces and claws are tempered just right. Claws are split to a fine point. Handles are made of selected second growth hickory, put in with iron wedges so they will

not become loose." [1] The writer has found customers who have looked at hammers that had these features but who could not name one of them. Others could not give more than two or three. In only exceptional cases did all the seven features impress themselves upon the mind of the customer and only then because the latter was especially acquainted with hammers.

In looking at hammers in hundreds of stores not one has indicated all of the features shown by the mail order catalogue description. Salespeople take it for granted that if a handle is selected second growth hickory, customers will know it even though it is mahogany finished. Why such wisdom should be imputed to the average customer it is difficult to see. But it is not merely the hidden points about an article that customers cannot see; it is just as true that the surface features often leave no tangible impression on the customer's mind. People do not see that the " claws are split to a fine point " until they are appraised of this fact, even though they may be *looking at* the claws.

What is here said respecting a simple unpretentious object like a hammer applies to even a greater extent to larger and more complicated articles. Yet many salespeople overlook this fact. Men's ready-to-wear may have many features that would make it appear of greater value in the eyes of the customer if these were brought to his attention, but which might as well not exist unless they are. The mail order houses indicate carefully all the more important details of each garment, and with the portrayal of each feature the clothing is increased in value in the customer's eyes.

It may be said by some that the mail order houses

[1] Sears, Roebuck & Co., Catalogue, 1918.

must describe their goods carefully and thoroughly because they cannot exhibit them, therefore their situation cannot be compared to that of the retailer who places the goods before the customer's eyes. The answer to this is that goods cannot be sold unless they make an impression on the mind of the customer. In some cases the retailer's goods actually make less of an impression on the customer's mind than articles described in the mail order catalogue "so one can almost see them," as one woman remarked. She might also have said, "and feel them," as indicated by the following taken from the description of a mail order house mattress: "This mattress is smooth, even, springy, as soft and buoyant as a feather pillow. Made with a smooth, even surface, no tufts of any kind being used, it fits itself snugly to every curve and line of the body. You do not rest upon the 'high points' as with the ordinary mattress. This provides absolute relaxation for every muscle — producing the most restful, refreshing sleep." [1] Such a description that makes so vivid the "feel" of the mattress takes the place to a large extent of exhibiting the article itself. People somehow think that they *know* the article; and they do know it in a very important sense because they have rested their bodies on this comfortable mattress — in their imagination. But people have to do things in their imagination before they can do them in actuality. If retail stores could give descriptions of this caliber (the kind that describes the article giving pleasure to the owner, i. e., the kind that uses imagination) and at the same time show the goods in actuality, their effectiveness in selling would be doubled. The mail order houses of necessity describe their goods so people can see them;

[1] *Ibid.*

but is it not just as necessary for the retailers to be certain that the customer *sees* the features that they are anxious should be seen. Salespeople can never be *certain* that the article they are attempting to sell is really seen as they want it to be seen, without working out descriptions that will call the customer's attention to the things most desirable to be noticed. There is no limit to the possibilities in this direction. The salesperson anxious to get results can use effectively the principle used by the mail order houses.

## CHAPTER III

## KNOWING THE GOODS (*continued*)

Granting all that has been said is true, the salesperson may ask what is the best method of procedure in securing the knowledge required for selling.

In the first place, the goods should be tested in both a *technical* and *practical* manner or if such tests have already been made by the manufacturer the salesperson should have knowledge of them. A case illustrating what is meant by manufacturers' technical tests is that of a prominent brand of men's socks. This brand of socks togther with five other brands were tested for tensile strength by a board of impartial judges representing an educational institution. The machine used for this purpose stretched the socks to the breaking point and a delicately sensitive needle registered on a dial the resisting power or tensile strength of each fabric. On the basis of this and other tests this nationally advertised sock was given a gold medal at an exposition. In the literature sent out by this company to dealers much is made of this important technical test, but the writer, although he has inquired for this brand of socks for two years over a wide territory, has found only one salesperson who has referred to it.

The mail order houses do not overlook such an opportunity of augmenting the value of their goods in the customer's estimation. In a recent edition of a mail order

catalogue on ready-to-wear clothes,[1] the selling talk says that the manufacturer "makes many tests — more tests than the average maker of men's clothing — to be sure the color is absolutely fast, that the fabric possesses the necessary strength to insure long service and that there are no imperfections in the weave." In another catalogue this same company describes their tester sitting beneath a slowly moving roll of their suit fabric, above which is a powerful electric light, searching for flaws or imperfections in the material. The mail order houses realize the influence on their customers' minds of the suggestion of the absolutely reliable nature of their materials.

Most manufacturers have tested their materials and are always willing to give the results of their experiments. In fact, they often send this material to retailers but it sometimes goes unread because its value in making sales is not fully realized. Nothing gives a salesperson so much confidence in the goods as to know from actual test what the goods will do. The sales talk changes from a half-hearted, not fully certain one, to one that carries conviction because it has the ring of sincerity in it — the glow of enthusiasm. Where technical tests have not been made by the manufacturer the salesperson can often devise some of her own. Usually, however, this is not necessary.

*Practical tests* are more easily worked out and used by salespeople. Practical tests consist of putting articles to the use for which they are intended and by careful observation ascertaining to what degree they justify the claims made for them. Cooking utensils lend themselves readily to such tests. One of the greatest talking points

[1] Sears, Roebuck & Co., 548K — 6th edition, page 3.

for the aluminum griddle is that cakes can be cooked upon it without the use of grease. Yet many salespeople could not use this selling point in a positive manner, and perhaps not at all, simply because they doubt the accuracy of the assertion themselves. Practical tests always strengthen the selling talk.

Have men in your community used the brand of razor your store is selling, and do they like it? What reasons do they give for desiring it more than some competing razor? If these questions could be answered by questioning customers who are enthusiastic over their purchases, a great moral force would be created which would carry conviction in future sales talks regarding this article.

Clothing, furniture, musical instruments, in fact most everything, can undergo a practical test either by the salesperson herself or by the customer; but whichever is the case, the knowledge gained should be skillfully tabulated, classified and fitted into the salesperson's plans for selling these goods. Tests of all kinds are valuable not so much because they convince the customer but because they convince the salesperson. When the latter is really convinced about anything the customer is favorably impressed and often does not take the time to ascertain *why*. It is enough for her that a powerful motive based on knowledge lies back of the salesperson's attitude and talk.

In the second place, an accurate, scientific and valuable fund of knowledge respecting any article can be secured by making an intensive study of it and classifying the results of this study on a card. Any size card may answer the purpose but a good practicable size is three by five inches. Each card should be filed away in alphabetical order so that it can be promptly found for study or review.

The first classification on this card should be a list of the *senses that the article appeals to.* The only entrances to the will power are through the five senses: sight, taste, touch, hearing and smelling. Through these channels the brain receives impressions. The more the impressions and the greater their intensity, the greater the likelihood of a sale. Very often a salesperson, not realizing this important fact, holds up an article so that the customer can see it and after stating the price waits for the customer to decide. Only one sense is being appealed to, only one channel to the seat of decision is being utilized; all the rest are going to waste. Or, a salesperson may exhibit an article in poor light or in a position that makes it hard for the customer to see it adequately. While exhibiting the article in this way the salesperson may give an interesting sales talk, but practically only one sense organ is functioning, i. e., the ears. Now, if in each of these cases instead of appealing merely to one of the senses two could be reached, the salesperson's selling efficiency in this respect would increase one hundred per cent. Further, if the salesperson could show the goods to the best advantage and give a pleasing and effective sales talk, and at the same time encourage the customer to handle the article, or wear it if it can be worn, a third sense, touch, has been appealed to and the salesperson has tripled her selling efficiency. Likewise, if the other senses can be drafted to assist in securing the sale, the effectiveness of the sales talk has increased tremendously.

The number of senses that any article is capable of appealing to is by no means always obvious. Much study is often needed to ascertain in just what way an article can make its appeal to the senses. Merchandise that at

first thought might seem capable of appealing to only two or three senses, after a careful study can often be found to be capable of appealing to four or possibly all of the senses. Silks, in the hands of a clever salesperson, can be made to "talk." When this is accomplished while a pleasing sales talk is being given, the sense of hearing is doubly impressed. Groceries are sometimes made to appeal to all the senses. Biting into a luscious pear invariably makes some sound no matter how much care is exercised to prevent it. The sound impression, though faint, gives weight to the buying judgment. To have a customer smell leathers may reinforce the argument in their favor. To "ring" a kettle is to aid the customer to make a decision.

Whether or not, however, taste and smell can be appealed to in any particular case, there seems little excuse for failure to employ the other three most common senses in securing decisions to buy. Not enough salespeople allow customers to handle the goods. Present day store fixtures are fortunately so arranged that in most cases goods are in open display on tables where the customer can get her hands on them. There is also much to be done in working out the most favorable manner in which to show goods. Some pile fabrics do not show up to advantage if the light strikes on them in a certain way. Certain colors appear to better advantage under a strong light, others under a more delicate one. In other words, the salesperson should be certain that the customer is seeing what it is desirable she should see, and not something else.

The second classification is, like the first one, the result of a careful study of an article. It answers the question, *What is the article capable of accomplishing?*

What does it do? This is a more difficult question to answer for each individual commodity than is at first apparent. In order to test the salesperson's ability to give the functions that any article is capable of performing, let her sit down with a chair, a pair of shoes, a diamond ring, or any other article before her and ask herself the question, "What will this article do?" It will be found much more difficult than was supposed to give more than the commonplace about each article. The value of making such an analysis is illustrated by the following case. A father was in a jewelry store seeking a Christmas gift for his daughter when the salesperson, somewhat against the customer's desire, interested him in a diamond ring. Finally, however, he swept the ring aside with the air of one having made a final decision and said, "My daughter has too many of such things already," inferring that any more jewelry, no matter what its nature, would tend to make his daughter vain. After only a second's hesitation the salesperson said, "This diamond is the most beautiful and permanent form in which you can show your affection for your daughter." The father took renewed interest in the ring and after two or three more appeals to the parental instinct [1] the sale was made. That salesperson had asked herself the question, "What will this diamond do?" It is true a diamond is capable of making people vain but it has other important functions which it is well to know.

All goods can be taken up in this same manner and the results of the intensive study will be surprising. It is by no means an easy task. To do any work thoroughly and scientifically is not always easy, but it is not the easy way that usually produces results. Apparently unknown to

[1] See page 71.

some, retail selling is as capable of an intensive study as is law, medicine or the other professions; and for those who make this study the rewards are even larger than can be secured with equal effort in the professions. Four to six years of continuous study after graduation from high school is the rule rather than the exception for those entering law or medicine and in some cases dentistry. If a similar period of time was spent in study and laboratory work by those entering retail selling they would become just as truly experts in their line and would command incomes proportionate to their effectiveness. Experts in retail selling are greatly in demand but there has thus far been no organized, systematic method of supplying them. Schools and stores in the future will give courses of training to meet this demand.

The third item on the card should tell *where the article is made and by whom.* Oftentimes customers have been through factories or know some of the employees, directors or officers of establishments, the goods from which are before them in the store. A sentimental value is thus attached to the goods in addition to that explained by the salesperson. Shoes that are made in New England often hold a preference in the customer's mind over shoes made elsewhere. Also, furniture made in Grand Rapids sometimes seems better to customers than that made somewhere else. Whether or not the customer has any justification for her belief is of no consequence. Fortunately, it is not the duty of the salesperson to dispel all the illusions of the customer. It is her duty to understand the goods and the customer and sell the former to the latter in the most advantageous way to the mutual benefit of both parties to the transaction.

Telling the customer by whom the article is made may

have great influence if this information is given in a clever manner, even though the customer has no knowledge of the manufacturer. The writer evidenced a case illustrating this point. A salesperson told the customer, with a great deal of deference in her voice, that a cloak was made by "The Blank Company, the well known manufacturers of New York City." The customer was deeply impressed, and not until after the cloak was purchased did she realize that the name of the company held no meaning for her. In the sales talk, however, it fitted in as a positive point and suggested acquiescence on the part of the customer by being associated with the words "well known." In many cases not only the manufacturers' name could be given but also some policy characteristic of them or some methods peculiar to their use. With the deliberative customer this information can be used with especially good effect. This type often demands an extra amount of knowledge before a decision can be made, and such can be given promptly if it has been secured, arranged and classified in advance.[1]

The fourth classification should explain *how the article is made and what it is composed of.* Such knowledge is valuable for any article. In groceries it is invaluable but only too often lacking. How many grocery salespeople could tell how some of our patent breakfast foods like Grape Nuts are made. Some people are actually adverse to buying foods like this because they imagine there is some injurious element concealed in them. It is a fundamental principle of human nature to be suspicious of what one does not understand. It would seem to be the function of the salesperson to replace suspicion with confidence by giving the composition of goods and how they

[1] See page 96.

are made. Such material is gladly sent by manufacturers on request, as it is to their interest to have their more general processes open and well known. Knowledge is the only means of killing suspicion.

To know what some fabrics are made of and how, is a liberal education in and of itself. The process by which the beautiful brocades are manufactured is ingenious enough to excite the admiration of any one for the inventor, Jacquard. How minerals are mixed with silks, and how many of our commonest articles are constructed, is intensely interesting and often can be made to appeal in this manner to the customer. Too many things in the average retail store are mysteries to those who are selling them. Only when they are brought into the world of reality by knowing reasons for their peculiar existence, are they really "sold" to the salesperson herself; and the latter must be "sold" before the customer will buy.

In some cases, only by knowing what the goods are made of, and by explaining the composition of the article to the customer, can the purchase give off lasting satisfactions to the buyer. Shoes are an illustration. Several instances have been brought to the writer's attention where customers have purchased shoes, expecting leather counters, boxing and insoles (having been led to expect such a condition by the salesperson), and subsequently have been disappointed to find that such was not the case. The salesperson in some instances believed these parts of the shoe were leather and rather than lose a sale "took a chance" on positively affirming something which was by no means certain. By following this policy these salespeople were actually dishonest because they did not treat the customer fairly.[1] That they were not

[1] See page 121.

intentionally dishonest is little consolation when customers feel that they have not received a square deal. Ignorance is no justification before the law, neither is it before the customer. Knowing what an article is made of is an absolute necessity for efficient selling. The only certain way to make this knowledge effective is to write it out and place it on a card with the other information about the article.

In ascertaining how the article is made and its composition, it may help the salesperson to be given a method of approach. If the following six sale classifications are comprehensively worked out in respect to any article, the salesperson will have a good working knowledge of the goods.

First, has the article been through any special processes that would add to its value? In the case of the gloves referred to elsewhere, it was seen that one pair had gone through a special process of tanning that made them more durable and flexible and therefore of greater value than the gloves that had not had the benefit of this longer and more expensive process. Some writing paper has been dried by the "loft process," while other kinds have been dried on rollers. The former process having necessitated more hand work naturally costs more, but the increased cost not only represents added labor cost but likewise finer texture, greater utility, in other words, greater value.

Many more cases could be given to illustrate the point but perhaps enough has been said to indicate the necessity of knowing *how* the product is made. To know how things are made is only another way of knowing reasons for prices — a most important element in sales talks. To be without this information is to grope blindly about the

store looking at goods but not seeing them. For it must be emphasized again that people do not necessarily see what they look at; they see only those things that their education and environment enables them to see. Environment alone is often dulling to the senses because the elements in it become commonplace, hence the necessity of invoking education (study of goods) to unearth the important characteristics of the stock that would otherwise remain unknown.

Second, has the article been inspected for imperfections? The use made of this important point by the mail order houses as regards cloth for suits, has already been referred to. Underwear, hosiery, shirts, dress goods, furniture, lace, leather goods and many other articles are often carefully inspected by manufacturers before they leave the factory. Such inspection adds value to the product, but the customer cannot see this important element of value unless it is specifically brought to her attention. Value must be conceived of as a composite thing including within itself many elements, and it should be the duty and privilege of the salesperson to analyze carefully what goes to make up value in any individual case. Unless this is done, customers cannot be expected to see that value is equivalent to the price marked on the tag, and it is only when price appears to be equivalent to value that goods are purchased.

Third, does the manufacturer stand behind the article with a guarantee? If he does, it means that the manufacturer, being closer than any one else to the productive process, sees in the article more than any one else possbily can, and perhaps even more than can be described in the advertising matter. This surplus of value, indicated by no specific process or material, is lumped to-

gether and represented by a blanket guarantee that the article will be satisfactory in every way, or by a specific guarantee that certain special materials or processes will prove out in practice that which is claimed for them.

The psychology of the guarantee is that it minimizes the risk assumed by the customer. With less risk there is more value. People generally are hesitant to take risks of any sort, hence the large amounts of life insurance held by people of all classes. The tendency of modern industry and commerce is toward more certainty, i. e., less risk. The minimum wage, guaranteed stock, increase of the salaried class and decrease of the entrepreneur class, all indicate this general groping toward more security in widely differing lines of activity. Guarantees by manufacturers are following the trend of the times and salespeople are overlooking a strong selling point if they are not informing the customer when these insurances against risk exist.

Fourth, do hand processes figure largely in the construction of the article? Machinery has revolutionized industry, but because it standardizes goods and tends toward uniformity of product many people are prejudiced against goods made in this way. Thus we see people pointing out with exultation the unevennesses in the patterns of rugs made by hand. The individuality of the weaver has exhibited itself in the construction of the rug and the dull uniformity of the machine process does not present itself. Again, most every one can have machine made goods but hand made goods are not so common. To get something "different" seems to be as strong an instinct in humans as is imitation. The fact that a knife blade is hand made, that button holes are hand stitched, that seams are hand sewed, that shoes are hand

constructed, all tend to increase the value of these articles in the eyes of customers. After some classes have succeeded in procuring something "different," other classes proceed to imitate this demand and soon large amounts of hand made goods are placed on the market. Soon demand may switch to some other feature of construction, but at present there is no doubt that a great impetus has been given to hand processes. The salesperson must see clearly this element of value and ascertain whether or not it has an appeal for the customer. If this element of value means nothing to the latter, the other features of the article should be emphasized, or a machine made article exhibited. Many people as yet would prefer a machine made rug with even, uniform patterns, to the eccentric pattern of the hand constructed one.

Fifth, is there any special raw material or element that enters into the construction of the article? Many new compositions and substitutes have recently come upon the market to the amazement and growing perplexity of the customer. Some mattresses are now stuffed with a certain interesting South American wood that possesses qualities peculiarly adapted to the purpose it serves. Chairs are made of paper especially treated to give them great strength, beauty and durability. Straw hats often have special straw or wood chips grown under peculiar conditions; other goods are composed of queer materials brought from the four corners of the earth, with qualities rarely adapted to the functions they are to perform. Knowledge of the tribute customers owe to commerce and industry is valuable because it impresses the customer with a reason for the price and excites admiration for the store's progressiveness in securing new products.

Sixth, has the article, naturally or artificially, been in-

sured against deterioration? Some colors are made fast by secret processes, or exceptional dyes have been used. Thus, the vegetable dyes used in some imported rugs are more permanent than the aniline or mineral dyes used in some domestic rugs. Certain furniture is constructed so it will not easily warp. Oftentimes fabrics have been pre-shrunk. Some metals are treated with preparations that prevent rusting, while a metal like aluminum cannot rust because it does not form an oxide with the air. Thread silk grows better with age while fiber silk decays or cracks. Some woods are treated so as to perpetually prevent decay. Likewise, there are often certain ways of handling or using goods which will increase their life.

Anything of this nature, if transferred to the customer effectually, increases the importance of the goods in her estimation. It is in reality comparable to a reduction in price for her because it is felt that more is being secured for the money than was anticipated. If such information was more frequently given, price reductions would not be requested as often as they are at present, because when the customer asks to have the $50 suit reduced to $45 it merely means that the salesperson has only described $45 worth. The customer appraises the value of any article not by the price on the tag but by *what she sees in it.*

As an illustration indicating with what interest and effectiveness a description of merchandise construction can be portrayed, is the following item taken from a mail order catalogue:[1] "There are no layers in this mattress. It is filled with 100 per cent pure, choice long fiber staple cotton, left in its natural creamy white color as it comes from the pod, elastic and as pure as sunshine.

[1] Sears, Roebuck & Co., Catalogue, 1918, p. 1134.

This cotton is all blown apart by compressed air until the fibers are thoroughly separated, leaving each fiber with its natural curl and springiness, free and unrestrained. This buoyant mass of cotton is fed into a large mold — a box the length and width of the mattress and several feet deep. The cotton is fed in from above, slowly and evenly by compressed air, and air currents distribute it uniformly as it sifts into the mold like gently falling snow. About 50 pounds of this light, airy substance is blown into the mold, then compressed to the thickness of the mattress. This one giant batt, made up of millions of long, tough fibers all matted together in one integral part, is then slipped into the ticking, completing the mattress. . . ."

The fifth classification consists of *the most important selling arguments*. These should be to the point and reviewed from time to time. How to appeal to the buying motives (instincts) of the customer should be indicated. As stated elsewhere,[1] the more instincts that can be appealed to, the more effective the sales talk. How many instincts any article is capable of appealing to can only be ascertained by careful study of each commodity that a salesperson sells. Such a study may be found quite difficult at first but soon will become pleasurable and productive of business-getting methods. To appeal in each case to the most powerful buying motives is to economically sell goods, because the feelings closest to the surface, i. e., those most susceptible to suggestion, are the ones utilized.

If there is still some doubt in the salesperson's mind how the knowledge requisite to effective selling can be secured, a few sources of material may be suggested.

[1] See Chap. IV.

The first of these is the goods themselves. Much of the time spent at present by salespeople in idling could very profitably be utilized in examining the goods which they are daily handling, and in analyzing their characteristics and evidences of value. Making tests as already indicated will do much toward inspiring the salesperson with confidence in the merit of the stock. Unfortunately, there seems to be an impression among some salespeople that the qualities of goods of daily consumption are obvious to the casual observer. Experience has proved that this belief is unfounded in fact. Careful, painstaking study must be made, even of the simplest article, if that article is to be comprehensively known. When it is considered that scientists sometimes spend an entire lifetime studying some part of the human body or a tiny insect, and still feel that there is much more to learn, how necessary is it for salespeople to realize that the true merit of any article cannot be ascertained by a superficial examination.

Secondly, much valuable information regarding any article can be secured from the traveling salesman who sold it to the store. These men often have been through the factory where the goods are manufactured and know the processes of importance through which the goods have passed. They may know their composition and qualities not seen on the surface. Usually they are enthusiastic about their line and will transmit this enthusiasm if given the chance. Unfortunately, this important source of information is not made use of in most stores, at least not by the salesperson. The department buyer may profit by the salesman's information but only seldom does this knowledge pass to the salesperson behind the counter in a form that will prove effective.

Third, advertisements in magazines and newspapers often give short concise facts about the goods that are invaluable. Especially is this true of trade papers and magazines. The manufacturers have studied their goods carefully and have tried to ascertain their most important elements of value. Not only this. They have spent much time and effort in working out the most effective manner of presenting these qualities. The salesperson should feel grateful that such pioneering work has been done for her. She should follow the advertisements from week to week or month to month and keep her selling talk fresh and interesting by incorporating into it the new ideas appearing in them.

The advertisements of the store should likewise be followed closely in order to see what goods the store is offering and why they are being offered. Customers are invited to call at the store and look at definite specified articles indicated in the advertisement. Sometimes when they answer such an invitation the first salesperson they meet is ignorant of just where these advertised articles are to be found. Lack of confidence in the store's methods is thus generated in the customer, which it is later difficult to overcome. If the salesperson knows a few important facts about goods in other departments and reads the store's advertisements concerning them, she can aid other departments by creating interest for the articles in the customer's mind; and in turn her own department will benefit by the intelligent understanding of its offerings by salespeople in other departments. Only by reading the daily advertisements of the store can knowledge of the store's goods be fully known, and cooperation between departments become a reality.

Fourth, a letter to the manufacturer requesting sales

helps will usually bring much "dealer-coöperation" literature. Of all the sources of knowledge this perhaps is the most important. Manufacturers often send this material with the goods but frequently the retailer relegates it to the scrap heap.[1] Because this literature is sent free and oftentimes when not asked for, salespeople and also retailers have sometimes secured the impression that such material is worthless. In reality, it could not be more valuable. Clever methods of displaying the goods are suggested, and especially important are the distinguishing features of the goods clearly and forcibly stated. In one booklet sent out to retailers, a manufacturer of men's shirts states that the neck bands have been cut with steel dies so that there is absolutely no chance of sizes varying. The reader possibly realizes the strength of this talking point, especially if he has had some 15½ size shirts that have been larger than others; yet the salespeople selling this brand of shirts have seldom been known by the writer to use this element of value in their sales talks. They do not know what the manufacturer says about his own product. Every town has a good many dealers selling shirts, incubators, toys, underwear, firearms and other articles, and to judge which dealer has the "best" is often a herculean task. Sometimes similar articles in different stores seem to be completely alike. When such is the case it is only by chance or because of service that an intelligent customer buys at any store. When an article has an element of value which is not obvious, yet which in reality distinguishes it from other makes, it is indeed unfortunate if this distinction is not brought to the attention of the customer

[1] The writer has seen several stores in the smaller towns where dealers' helps were used for lighting fires.

through the mediums of advertising and selling. Value is usually not an obvious thing; reasons for its existence must be dug up. The digging up process is irksome, takes mental effort and is expensive; but if the manufacturer sees fit to unearth the value of his goods it would seem that it is not a waste of time for the retailer and his salespeople to learn how this value was created, for it must eventually be recreated in the minds of customers.

The last source of information is the public library. Encyclopedias give the history and description of some articles of everyday consumption, oftentimes quite in detail. They provide a great mass of information that is both entertaining and of an educational value. They are too infrequently used. Many salespeople do not know that they exist. If they do not use them it may be said that these sources of information *do not exist* so far as they are concerned. Many libraries have books on textiles, shoes, household furnishings, jewelry, novelties and other goods. Some of these consist of technical descriptions but much of the material is of a clearly understandable nature, often written in an interesting, vigorous style. The salesperson should ascertain what instruction the library can give. If books on the line desired are not in the library, the librarian can ascertain from publishers' catalogues what books have been written on the subject, and if there is a fund available for the purpose a purchase for the library may be made. The writer has often been told by librarians that few books on business and allied subjects were purchased because of the small demand for them. Once a healthy demand for business books develops in any community, the library will usually endeavor to meet it by new purchases. If the library has no fund available for the purchase of a book desired

by a salesperson the latter need not despair. Many stores are willing to order salesmanship books for their salespeople, but where they are not, such can be coöperatively purchased by several salespeople interested in the same line. There is no justification for lack of knowledge. If the selling job looms up large enough in the salesperson's mind, ways and means for coping with its possibilities will present themselves.

Knowledge of goods has thus far been discussed from one standpoint, viz., the elements that go to make up quality value. It is important that goods should be known from two other standpoints, viz., location and quantity.

(a) *Location.*

It is not merely enough to finally locate the goods desired by the customer. Time is an important element in the sale. Promptness in showing goods is one of the elements of service, and service is the reason for the existence of the store.

A systematic arrangement of stock is absolutely necessary. Whether the goods are kept on counters, boxes or loose upon the shelves, the exact location of each article should be definitely known. If memorizing location is found to be difficult, a chart of the section or store, with the location of goods, can be made and referred to from time to time until it is part of the fund of knowledge. Finding of sizes, styles, grades, etc., of each class of goods then becomes automatic and impresses the customer with the efficiency of the store.

(b) *Quantity.*

Knowledge of the quantity of stock is to retailing what the safety valve is to the boiler — it prevents trouble.

If the stock runs low an explosion by some customer takes place sooner or later and dollars are lost.

Further, there should be a constant review of stock so that all old, backward or surplus stock, odds and ends, remnants, broken lots and shop-worn goods can be featured and closed out.

It is also well to make note of any goods that are called for but which are not carried in stock. Possibilities of substitution should be considered and reasons ascertained why particular goods in question are called for.

It is the store's business to have in stock what a store of its kind and character customarily carries. If it fails to supply what custom and demand dictates, the store is failing to perform one element of service which is vital to its success.

# CHAPTER IV

## KNOWING THE CUSTOMER

A prominent salesman once said, "Salesmanship is chiefly applying an intimate knowledge of human nature in selling." Others occupied in selling goods have also laid great weight on understanding human nature, while some have even gone so far as to say that the only qualification for salesmanship is a *complete* knowledge of the customer. From one viewpoint this latter assumption is true. The other three elements of salesmanship, viz., knowing the goods, knowing one's self and knowing the selling process, may be considered only as different aspects of knowing the customer. Self-confidence, ability to answer questions, and an interesting sales talk, acquired as the result of knowing the goods, are necessities to a salesperson because human nature is favorably impressed with these requirements. Likewise, the elements of character and personality such as politeness, honesty and promptness, are emphasized by the scientific salesperson for the simple reason that she understands human nature and knows that such qualities make a favorable impression. Knowing the selling process is merely understanding a part of human nature, viz., the working of the human mind. To understand how the mind arrives at a decision implies a knowledge of human nature.

If, then, human nature is the chief element in salesmanship, why should *four* elements be considered inde-

pendently? Why should not the three elements of salesmanship indicated above be subordinate classifications under the all-important heading — knowledge of human nature? The answer to this is that it is taken for granted that human nature is the *background* for selling, hence the elements of salesmanship should specifically state by what methods human nature can be reached. The present chapter, then, while entitled, Knowing the Customer, recognizes that all salesmanship is knowing or understanding human nature as represented by the customer, but it likewise realizes that human nature has elements of likeness and difference which lend themselves to specific and effective methods of approach. It is to indicate this particular phase of knowing the customer that this and the next chapter is devoted.

*Salesmanship is the art of persuading people to purchase goods which will give off lasting satisfactions, by using methods which consume the least time and effort.* Such methods always discover the most vulnerable points in human nature and then concentrate on these. To do otherwise is to needlessly expend both time and energy, something which no salesperson can afford to do. Scientific selling is selling where conditions to the sale are understood. It is the opposite from haphazard selling or selling without plan and without anticipating what the results of certain operations will be. The unscientific salesperson does not know where she is going but she is on her way. The scientific salesperson knows what methods she is using and what effect they will produce. She is operating intelligently. When she pulls a lever called an instinct she realizes what reactions are taking place in the customer's mind; and she knows which levers are the most desirable to pull in different situations. If the unscien-

tific salesperson pulls the right lever in any situation it is entirely by chance; it is just as possible for the wrong lever to be pulled. In other words, the latter salesperson is working in the dark while the former sees her operations distinctly by the light of knowledge.

Certain motives for buying, certain instincts, are common to all people. Some are stronger in some people, others have greater influence with other people, but every person has certain instincts which, although apparently dormant, if appealed to effectively will spring into activity and initiate action in the direction desired. A knowledge of these insincts is, then, very necessary in salesmanship. If known and understood they can be used as instruments with which to forge out sales. In a sense they can be considered as the levers which, if pulled tactfully, will ring up sales in the cash register. They are the points of contact that every sales talk should make use of; and just to the extent that these known aids to selling are intelligently utilized can any sales talk be considered truly effective. From the standpoint of salesmanship the following instincts are the most important.

1. *Self-preservation.* By means of this instinct man has been enabled to survive the natural terrors and dangers of his environment. Stone clubs and other crude weapons were made and used against wild animals and hostile races in order to preserve the physical self, while the necessity of providing sustenance and shelter was likewise paramount. Through ages of time these two necessities for self-preservation primarily interested all mankind. Within recent years, since the industrial and agricultural revolutions, man's ability to produce sustenance and shelter has increased many thousand fold, thereby making mere physical preservation comparatively easy;

while inventions and the production of great wealth have enabled the western peoples to organize armies and build navies which preserve the people from hostile outside forces, thus removing what was formerly one of the chief dangers to individual and collective existence.

What then is the significance of the instinct of self-preservation at the present time? The necessity of preserving the physical self has been replaced by that of maintaining the social self. The present-day economic struggle is not waged around physical existence or even physical well being, but it centers in maintaining a standard of living or a set of conditions necessary to *mental* comfort. Self-preservation today consists largely in keeping one's social image intact, that is, in maintaining the kind of person that people think we are. How to preserve our social self, i. e., what people think we are, has indeed become a necessity as well as a problem. We can only preserve this all-important " self " by ascertaining continually what goods other people think necessary to maintain their " selves," and by comparing our " selves " with our conception of the social image of our " selves."

This is where the salesperson places the entering wedge. If it can be intimated in a tactful manner that the customer's social self will suffer through failure to purchase an article, a powerful instinct has been appealed to which will tend to produce action satisfying to itself. If the customer feels for an instant that her " self " as others see her (social self) will not be preserved unless a certain action is taken, the chances are greatly in favor of that action being taken. But first of all the customer must *see* the situation clearly. Then she must be made to *feel* what a disparaged social self would mean to her mental comfort.

How this can be accomplished in any individual case is something for each salesperson to work out for herself. No general rule can be laid down to cover all eventualities. Salespeople selling wearing apparel and household furnishings have especially good possibilities for making practical use of this instinct. Either sex will usually buy a new garment if it believes that its "self" (as viewed by others) will be strengthened thereby; but in *every case,* if circumstances permit, a new garment will be purchased rather than have the social self reduced in importance. Mental comfort has become as important as physical comfort formerly was. The clever salesperson devises ways and means of showing the customer how purchases of certain goods are conducive to this much valued mental comfort and how going without certain goods is not worth while because of the mental anguish caused by what others think. Clear cut ideas leading toward a definite effect must be given the customer. What the salesperson desires to do should be clearly visualized and then the best methods devised for attaining this object. Instincts such as this when dealt with in a definite manner produce definite results. Only a clearly thought out *method* of approach will secure sales. Until the salesperson is willing to take the time to ascertain just how she is going to appeal to the instinct of self-preservation in selling different articles, it were better that it be left alone. With study, however, this instrument of approach will prove effective.

2. *Vanity.* Everybody has a streak of vanity but some people have a more prominent streak than others. Where this instinct is strong it has powerful potentiality for sales. Dress is very often a good index of vanity. The man or woman dressed gaudily in order to attract

attention is especially vain. Between this extreme and the conservatively dressed people are all degrees of vanity. Where it is prominent and appears to be a controlling factor in the customer's actions it should be appealed to strongly and consistently; where it is slumbering beneath the surface it should be awakened by a gentle but not insistent appeal. But every sales talk should have some appeals to vanity. They should be written down if necessary in order that they will become connected up with the article in the salesperson's mind and hence will not be forgotten when they are most needed.

How this powerful instinct may be appealed to differs of course with different goods. A ready-to-wear salesperson will place the garment on the customer and then step back, look admiringly at her and speak with enthusiasm of the combination. The customer's vanity is being appealed to when a salesperson selling linens says to the customer, " I see you are a good judge of linens "; when a kitchen utensil salesperson says, " Being a skilled cook you will especially appreciate this new arrangement "; when a furniture salesperson says, " Very few people appreciate our efforts to bring out the latest designs; I am so glad you admire them "; when a drapery salesperson remarks, " I am sure you would not be satisfied with anything but the latest "; when a phonograph salesperson exclaims, " We have some new records from your favorite artists "; when a ready-to-wear salesperson says to a customer whose husband has given his opinion regarding some garments, " Men certainly know ' right ' garments." Every article has within itself an appeal to a customer's vanity, but this appeal is not always apparent. It can usually only be discovered and applied after careful study of the goods.

Vanity is appealed to by repeating important remarks of the customer. One salesperson oftentimes says, "As you just said, etc., etc.," or, "The point you brought out is a good one," or, "Your way of putting it was just right." If anything that the customer says is repeated, confirmed or enlarged upon, the customer unconsciously feels that her opinions are of some importance, and as a result a pleasurable sensation is experienced. Customers like to shop where they are "felt to be somebody"; where their ego can expand. Salespeople should appreciate this fact much more than they do and provide the environment that the customer desires, even though that desire is an unconscious one. When this is done customers feel that they are "understood."

A customer's vanity is appealed to when the salesperson addresses her by name, and title if she has one. To say, "Good morning, Mrs. Jones," is to individualize that person thereby distinguishing her from Mrs. Brown or Mrs. Smith. To be solicitous of the customer's welfare, to do unexpected favors, to approach her promptly, to defer to her desires, all these things are appeals to the customer's vanity. These appeals to vanity are often overlooked but are usually more common than appeals to vanity in sales talks. The latter is what this discussion especially attempts to emphasize.

Vanity should be looked upon as a device to secure sales just as the show cases and advertisements exist for that purpose. A merchant who does not advertise or make use of the latest improvements in store equipment and design can justly be condemned, but no more than can the salesperson who has selling devices such as instincts at her service but fails to utilize them. Vanity is as much a part of human beings as are eyes or ears and it

is just as legitimate. If this is so, why should the senses be appealed to but not the instincts? Such practice is common, no doubt, due to the fact that the sense organs are obvious — they can be seen, while the powerful instincts are not visible and are therefore overlooked. As the instincts become better known salespeople will gradually devise selling appeals to them just as they have done for the senses.

3. *Parental.* Mothers and fathers instinctively prize their children above everything else. They will not hesitate to risk their own lives to save them from bodily injury neither will they avoid expense if they believe the welfare of their children will be bettered thereby. Parents are responsible for the condition of their children's social self,[1] and in any particular case if made to realize this by the salesperson, they will endeavor to protect it as they would protect their own social selves, only to a greater extent. Thus a salesperson can often appeal to two instincts at the same time thereby increasing materially the total effectiveness of the selling appeal.

The limits between which the parental instinct can be utilized are only fixed by the ingeniousness and constructive capacity of the salesperson. Some salespeople will see possibilities for its use where others do not. A woman, accompanied by her little girl, having just made a purchase was about to leave the ladies' ready-to-wear department when the salesperson took some furs from a nearby table and placed them on the child. The mother was impressed with their appearance as was also the child. The result was that the mother purchased the furs for her daughter. Here two instincts were appealed

[1] See page 67.

to, viz., parental and possession.[1] The mother did not have the heart to withhold from the child that which meant so much and was so becoming to her. Perhaps another salesperson would have seen no possibilities in this situation to appeal to the parental instinct.

To illustrate this point further, an example already used elsewhere[2] to clarify another point may be used. It will be remembered that the father hesitated to buy the diamond ring for his daughter because he believed it would make her vain. The salesperson pulled the lever of parental instinct when she said, "This diamond is the most beautiful and permanent form in which you can show your affection for your daughter." Another salesperson might have taken the rebuff from the customer and sought no further reasons why the ring should be purchased. There are, no doubt, reasons that could be devised against the purchase of every article, but there can likewise be devised reasons *for* the purchase of every article. The salesperson who can devise the most logical reasons why her goods should be purchased is laying the foundation for larger sales.

A vacuum cleaner salesperson appeals to the parental instinct by showing that dusty carpets endanger the health of little children who play on them. The book salesperson claims that children should have greater advantages than their parents had if they are to get anywhere in the world at the present time. The musical instrument salesperson sees a possibility of the child developing its taste for music. The hardware salesperson believes that the boy should have tools with which to develop his mechanical ingenuity. A picture salesperson

[1] See page 74.
[2] Page 48.

tells the mother that certain pictures will inspire her children.

If the children are with the mother or father, all the attention consistent with propriety should be paid them. The parents are flattered by any complimentary attention to their children. If the children shop without their parents they should be treated with every consideration because their likes and dislikes have weight with their parents. When a child praises a certain salesperson or store its parents hold a more favorable impression of that store or salesperson, while if the child makes adverse criticism the parent may conclude that the store has taken some advantage of the child. With the parent, *her child* is right. Pranks may be played and trouble started but *her* boy or girl "wouldn't think of doing such a thing." Since it is difficult if not impossible to disillusion parents regarding the real character of their children, it behooves salespeople to so treat children that they and their store are well spoken of in the homes of the community. Such a policy is also necessary for another reason, viz., the customers of tomorrow are the children of today.

4. *Companionship.* People enjoy the companionship of others, and anything that will make others desire one's companionship is thought to be especially desirable. If any garment will make one more companionable; if certain house-furnishings will make people want to get acquainted with us; if rare pictures, china, tapestries, linens or silver will make our companionship more sought after; if certain cooking utensils will facilitate the production of meals that will leave a favorable and lasting impression on our guests; in fact, if a customer can purchase anything that will make it desirable for people to become acquainted with her, she will be inclined to do so.

Human beings are gregarious animals. To be isolated from one's fellow beings is a great hardship. To be the center of attraction is a great source of mental comfort. What capacity for achieving this desirable end has any article? If this question is asked of every article the salesperson is selling, and if a careful study is made to find an answer to it, new possibilities of appeal will be found in the commonplace goods around us. Some goods, of course, have a greater capacity in this direction than others, but most all goods have some capacity, directly or indirectly, of attracting people toward the possessor.

5. *Possession.* People reluctantly part with that which they have once had in their possession. This fact is often illustrated in the case of children. A mother promises her child a doll. The child's face lights up with pleasure but the matter is soon forgotten. Later on, the mother points out the doll on the shelf in the store. The child is extremely pleased for a short period of time but other things soon distract its attention and the doll is forgotten. A few days later when the time for purchase has come, the doll is taken down from the shelf to be wrapped up. The child begs to hold the doll and is allowed to do so. Then the mother tries to persuade the child to return the doll to the salesperson so that it may be wrapped up. Does she succeed? It is indeed an exceptional child if it does not struggle to maintain that which it has in its possession. The "mine" feeling is predominant. What a few moments before was just a doll is now "my doll." To relinquish it would be to give up a part of "self." This, every one (not only children) finds it most difficult to do; for when the instinct of possession is utilized in selling goods the goods

in a sense become a part of the customer. To construct this intimate relation between the customer and the goods is very necessary in the making of sales.

This fact is illustrated by the following incident. A large 5 and 10 cent store system was accustomed to display pocket flashlights on an open table, but due to the fact that many of them were broken or rendered useless by reason of the constant handling by customers, an order was issued to inclose all of this line of goods in a glass case. Three months later this order was rescinded and instructions were given to restore the flashlights to the open tables. In the brief period of three months it had been found that it was better to have large sales with some broken flashlights than to have small sales and no broken flashlights. When customers were permitted to handle the flashlights, i. e., were able to be in possession of them for a few moments and could operate them as their own, the instinct of possession was functioning, while this was not the case when the flashlights were displayed under glass. In selling goods the instinct of possession must constantly be taken into account.

Only in comparatively recent times have merchants made extensive use of this instinct. This is true not only as regarding the display of goods but also in the matter of returned goods. When, half a century ago in Philadelphia, John Wanamaker advertised that goods could be taken out of the store on approval, his competitors thought that he was insane. The latter believed that the public would impose on any store adopting such a policy. They did not realize that while some loss would result from this plan, this would be more than offset by the increased sales resulting from the appeal to the instinct of possession. Since this pioneer effort

by a far sighted merchant most retailers have adopted the policy of goods sent out on approval.[1]

"Goods sent out on approval" can be considered as only an extension of the principle of open display within the store. Within the store the customer can handle or possess any article for only a few minutes and the "mine" feeling oftentimes does not have time to harden or crystallize into decision. The longer the period of possession, however, the stronger the "mine" feeling; so when the article is taken home for two or three days and placed in a familiar environment, time is given for this feeling of attachment, this feeling of reluctance to return a possessed thing, to develop.

Some articles cannot be sent out on approval but many are capable of being thus used without injury to themselves. Household furnishings like rugs, draperies and furniture, ready-to-wear that is not easily soiled, pictures, musical instruments, sweepers and vacuum cleaners, hardware, and many other lines are daily being sent out on approval by stores all over the country and more sales are being made because such is the case. Like the handling of open displays in the store the sending out of goods on approval means much expense and soiled and damaged goods, but if the increased sales more than offset this loss the policy can be justified. That this is the situation seems to be indicated by the persistence of the policy.

6. *Imitation.* It seems to be a fundamental trait of human beings to unconsciously imitate the sayings, doings and dress of others. Let one gaze into the open sky and soon a crowd of people are looking in the same di-

[1] Several large merchants in the Middle West adopted this policy about the same time as did Wanamaker.

rection. Let one stop and look intently into a show window and soon others will be doing the same. Let some fad come out and a following is rapidly secured for it. Let some one in a gathering yawn, chew gum, or smoke, and the general tendency is to imitate these actions.

The salesperson often appeals to this instinct by saying, "These are good sellers," or, "We sell a lot of these." The tendency is for people to buy what other people are buying. If we go to the box office to purchase tickets for a show and see that only a few tickets have been sold, the tendency is to turn away without purchasing, while a shortage of tickets induces us to quickly part with our money. Another salesperson will appeal to the instinct of imitation by quoting what some customer has said regarding a certain article. This is an indirect way of indicating that this particular customer has purchased this article, and is, therefore, especially effective. To directly state that Mrs. Jones has purchased a certain article can only be done in exceptional circumstances. Very often such a statement would be strongly resented as representing an attempt to influence the customer's opinion. Unfortunately, this crude method of dealing with the instinct of imitation has been too commonly used, and because it has often irritated customers the instinct of imitation itself has been condemned as one not capable of favorable appeal in selling goods. The trouble is not with the instinct but with the open manner in which it is used. Much care must be exercised in making such appeals so that the mechanism is not obvious. The mechanics of selling is a means to an end, viz., sales, and is not the end itself. When the method or technique of selling is more evident than

the meaning of the method, then there had better be less method or at least a change in it.

Besides telling what customers have *said* regarding any article, another method of employing the instinct of imitation is to indicate somewhere in the sales talk the experiences that customers have had with the goods. Thus, the shoe salesperson may say that Mrs. Jones likes a " turned sole " because it conforms so readily to the shape of the foot; or, Mrs. Smith uses *her* aluminum pancake griddle in a certain manner; or, Mrs. Black has worked out a delightful color scheme by using certain household furnishings. Such methods of appealing to the instinct of imitation are very effective. Many good qualities of goods can be brought to the attention of the customer, not by bald statement merely, but by indicating the relationship of these qualities to certain customer's opinions, experiences and preferences. Two methods of attack are thus combined and the result is doubly effective in convincing the customer.

Again, the statement of objections by customers often affords an opportunity of answering them through an appeal to the instinct of imitation. If the customer thinks that the shoe salesperson is fitting her " too long," perhaps Mrs. Jones thought the same thing but was afterwards pleased because she accepted the salesperson's advice. If the customer thinks that the price of a rug is " too high," perhaps Mrs. Smith had the same feeling until she realized that the value of the rug, because of certain features, was equal to the price. If the customer feels that a broad brimmed hat makes him look " funny," possibly his neighbor had the same feeling which disappeared when he became accustomed to it.

When objections are answered by appeals to the instinct of imitation as in these cases, customers are inclined to imitate the action of those whom they know, and trust that their satisfaction will prove as favorable as that of their acquaintances. Unconsciously to the customer, such appeals to the instinct of imitation challenge her self-respect; because if other people made the same objections as she did and yet *purchased the article,* why should not she see the invalidity of these objections as they did? In other words, if she imitates some people in making certain objections, why should not she also imitate them in purchasing the goods against which the objections have been levied? People's minds, like water, follow the line of least resistance. In this case, the line of least resistance is to imitate certain persons in purchasing an article, because they have already been imitated when the same objections as they gave were stated. To imitate once is to make it easier to imitate again. Appeals that show how a customer has already imitated make it easy for her to imitate again although in a different way.

Perhaps it is not superfluous to state that great care must be exercised in the selection of persons suitable as objects of imitation. The persons thus used must be admired by the customer or held in respect, otherwise there will be no incentive to imitate. Reference to a person who is repulsive to the customer, or one held in low esteem, is courting disaster to the sale. Like all other devices of selling, the instinct of imitation must be used with caution and in an intelligent way. Unless this is done it can operate no more effectively than the mower that is run over stones. *Under certain conditions* mowers work efficiently, and likewise only *under certain con-*

*ditions* will the machinery of salesmanship do what is expected of it. These "conditions" the salesperson must secure.

7. *Curiosity.* It seems to be characteristic of human nature to speculate on the true significance of that which is not fully apparent. When a store sale is going on and the show windows are plastered so thick with announcements of the sale that what is transpiring inside is a matter of speculation, people stand outside "wondering" how many people are inside and whether there really are the bargains announced. Usually this wondering or curiosity can only be satisfied by entering the store and seeing for one's self. Again, because of little incidents certain people have mentioned from time to time in their conversation with others, much speculation often arises as to people's ages, degrees of wealth, domestic happiness, social connections, etc. Advertisements play upon the instinct of curiosity when they present puzzle pictures or problems to be solved. A cleverly written story appeals to this instinct when the outcome of the plot is uncertain. The reader's interest is maintained to the finis because he knows that he will not be "satisfied" unless he finishes the story, i. e., his curiosity will not be satisfied. The public speaker giving a series of lectures holds the interest of his hearers through the series by dropping hints as to what is going to be discussed, but he is careful not to give enough of the future lectures to satisfy the curiosity of his audience. A great evangelist holds the attention of his hearers partly through use of this instinct. People "wonder what he is going to do next."

If the instinct of curiosity is capable of being utilized to such an extent in other fields, has it as great possi-

bilities in retail selling? Efficient salespeople all over the country have answered this question in the affirmative. They have succeeded in appealing to the customer's curiosity in many ways. No matter what line the salesperson is handling, careful study will reveal such methods of holding attention, securing interest, creating desire and inducing decision to buy. Methods like these do not come to the salesperson's consciousness on the spur of the moment. Only in rare cases is this true. Preparation of selling talks in advance is the only certain way to build up selling efficiency that is the result of making varied appeals to every feeling that is directly or indirectly connected with the forming of a decision.

Some indication how such appeals can be made may be helpful. A grocery salesperson over the phone appeals to the customer's curiosity when he describes the deliciousness of the pears, but adds, "Of course you cannot realize how really fine they are until you have tasted them." Speculation as to how they will taste and whether or not they will be as excellent as described, demands satisfaction, and this can only be accomplished by ordering and eating them. A ladies' ready-to-wear salesperson says to a woman who has tried on a suit coat and is undecided whether she wants it, "It will look altogether different when you get the skirt on." How it will actually look the customer can only surmise, but this very element of wonder holds her interest and makes her susceptible to the suggestions of the salesperson, as well as enabling the latter to present the entire suit under the most favorable conditions. The silk underwear salesperson says, "If you have never worn silk underwear you really cannot imagine how delightful is the sensation of its sheer, soft touch." Here the customer's imagination is strongly

appealed to but likewise her curiosity as to just how the underwear would "feel." A furniture salesperson may develop the customer's interest by thus appealing to her curiosity: "Perhaps you would be interested in knowing how this effect is produced."

The salesperson can make good use of the instinct of curiosity in the first step of the selling process, i. e., in gaining the customer's attention. Phrases such as, "Have you seen this new material?" "There are several features recently added to this article which give it unique distinction," "These goods have gone through a special process that makes them less liable to warp," "It is only with the greatest difficulty that these furs can be secured at the present time," "These hose have recently been subjected to a severe test in order to ascertain their tensile strength," all these appeal more or less strongly to the instinct of curiosity. Certain words or phrases in these sentences such as, "new," "features recently added," "special process," "greatest difficulty," "severe test," lend themselves to speculation. Something more must be added if their meaning is to be clear. In order to get her curiosity satisfied the customer must give the salesperson her attention, and this is all that the latter should wish for. When attention has been secured it devolves upon the salesperson to give such a sales talk that the customer will desire the goods intensely enough to buy them. Specialty salespeople and commercial travelers often consider the sale three-fourths made if they can get an audience, i. e., the customer's attention. Curiosity, cleverly appealed to through phrases such as those described, is a valuable device in attracting customers' attention to the goods.

The other steps in the selling process (securing inter-

est, creating desire and inducing decision) are also often more easily reached by making use of this instinct. When the customer's interest is lagging, if some goods are withheld from her and she is told that these will be shown in a few minutes, her curiosity to see them is the tonic that enables her to hold interest in the goods at hand. Keeping back some of the goods and yet referring to them is a method often used to tide the customer over a restless period and thus enables the salesperson to give the most effective selling points. All that the salesperson should ask for is an *opportunity* to present the goods in the most effective manner to the customer; but it must be realized that opportunities can be "created" (as indicated by devices for securing attention), and the "most effective manner" is something for the salesperson to devise. If conditions are not conducive to efficient presentation of selling points then some device must be used to create favorable conditions. Appeals to curiosity are very often the means of securing the right "conditions" for the favorable reception of the sales talk.

8. *Hunting.* People hunt for the joy of hunting. Sound-minded men will spend weeks of time and large sums of money in order to get a shot at a deer or follow the trail of some wild thing. Whether or not they bag any game is often immaterial; they have enjoyed the hunt. Because of the impelling power of this instinct men follow winding streams for miles in the hope of catching the wily trout. If one hole does not materialize the desired fish it is always the hole just around the bend that must have a "big fellow" in it. But whatever the result of the day's effort, many men get keen enjoyment out of the effort itself.

Not only does the hunting instinct exhibit itself in the

actions of men but likewise in those of the opposite sex. Women when they go shopping or bargain hunting are responding to this instinct as much as are men who go beast, bird or fish hunting. The principle in each case is the same; only the object hunted is different. Most women *like* to shop. They take keen pleasure in scenting out the "good values"— in getting bargains. In order to realize the truth of this assertion one need only observe stores where bargains or "specials" have been advertised. The hunting ground has been located and the hunt begins. It is no exaggeration to say that the hunt becomes so strenuous at times that physical exhaustion takes place. Several cases are known to the writer where customers were so eager to get at the bargain squares, and struggled so strenuously, that some of the contestants fainted and had to be taken off the field. No fox hunter ever made a greater effort to bag a fox than some customers do to get the advantages called bargains.

How can the salesperson capitalize this impelling instinct? The answer is, only by knowing *when* specials or bargains are offered and *where* they are to be found. This means a daily knowledge of the store advertising. Recently the writer unexpectedly asked a department store sales force of two hundred people what specials were being offered in that store on that particular day, and only five per cent were acquainted with the special offers outside of their own department. In some cases the salesperson had no knowledge of the specials in her own department. Obviously under such conditions customers cannot have adequate knowledge of the "hunting grounds," unless perchance they have read and remembered the advertisements which oftentimes is not the case.

The function of the salesperson, no matter what her department, is to act as guide to the customer-hunter. This does not mean that the salesperson should personally direct the customer to the departments where the specials are to be found, because very often the salesperson cannot leave her own department, but it does mean that *adequate descriptions* of specials should be given together with *specific directions* as to where they may be found. The customer is usually pleased to be introduced to the floor manager who may be able to conduct her to the department she is seeking. It is only too common a practice, even when a customer *asks* the location of certain goods, to indicate in a general and indefinite way where they may be found. Unless the directions are specific the customer's ardor is dampened, and as a result the department asked for may never have the opportunity of welcoming her.

Besides a feeling of indifference, another reason why departments do not coöperate to a greater extent with one another, is jealousy. One department manager is sometimes depressed when he sees the growing prosperity of another department, and his negative feeling dominates those working under him. While, perhaps, the latter do not openly knock the rival department, they at least do not boost it or call its specials to the attention of customers shopping in their department. Such friction is indeed unfortunate, especially so because it prevents utilization of the hunting instinct. If each department knows the important values in every other department, a firm foundation for appeals to the hunting instinct of customers has been laid; but even then jealousy must give way to friendly rivalry. "Each for all and all for each" should be the motto of every department store. Only

by following such a broad policy can the maximum sales in all departments be reached.

9. *Building.* People take pleasure in constructing things. To watch something materialize as the result of human effort usually affords keen enjoyment. Successful appeals have been made to this instinct by "knock down" furniture dealers. In reading advertisements dealing with furniture of this character, the imagination of the customer dwells on the pleasure to be derived from "putting the parts together." The same is true of "knock down" houses. Patterns appeal to this instinct in women. If the salesperson can picture the pleasure to be secured from making a garment and can enable the customer to visualize the finished product, a strong motive force for purchasing both patterns and materials has been appealed to.

Widely differing kinds of goods are capable of appealing to the instinct of building or construction: lace, buttons, piece goods, hat forms and decorations, beads, tools, lumber, paints, house fixtures, dyes, threads, yarns and many other items. In fact, the limits to this appeal are fixed by the salesperson herself. Each article should be studied carefully to ascertain its possibilities in this direction. Only in this way can the salesperson be certain that this lever is being utilized to its fullest extent in inducing customers to buy.

Oftentimes there is an educational element involved in building. Children, especially, develop muscle coördination and dexterity by weaving, carving, constructing things out of blocks, stone, clay, wood, iron or brass. Wherever this is true the parental [1] as well as the building instinct may be appealed to.

[1] See page 71.

Besides these instincts which are the most important ones for the salesperson to consider, there are two fundamental traits or characteristics of human nature which it will be well to remember and take into account when selling goods. These are *selfishness* and *laziness*. Everybody is selfish and everybody is lazy, although some people are more selfish and lazy than others. Proof of this statement is found in a study of people's actions and motives.

1. *Selfishness.* This term as here used refers to people who act to satisfy inward cravings of their being, *but not necessarily to the detriment of others.* Thus, the slum worker who leaves luxury and cleanliness and goes to years of labor amid filth and squalor is often called "unselfish," when in reality the decision to accept these conditions results from a desire to satisfy the feeling of obligation or duty found in the innermost self. If the impelling motive was not heeded, *satisfaction would not result.* Even in this case, then, the desire to satisfy self plays a strong part, although it may justly be claimed that the reason for this motive is the wretched condition of a certain class of people.

Again, a husband purchases a beautiful dress for his wife. People say he is an unselfish husband. In reality, he may be intensely gratified by hearing men say, "Look how he dresses his wife; he must be prosperous." Or, perhaps, the lover brings a box of candy or a bouquet of roses to his sweetheart. Self is thereby satisfied and a feeling of exultation experienced which appears to bold advantage beside the alternative of not performing this act.

If the salesperson can subtly indicate to the customer that self will be propitiated without evil consequences to

others by purchasing certain goods, or that the pleasure accruing to others because of a purchase will satisfy self, a strong appeal will have been made to a fundamental trait of human nature. Customers may have been dissatisfied with themselves for some time simply because they have failed to provide for some demand of their inner selves or for the wants of those whose welfare is intimately connected with their own. Here lies a strong motive for buying if the salesperson can but use it. If the longing to content self can be satisfied immediately by the purchase of goods, the salesperson should bring forth the "reasons why" this can be accomplished; and if the customer can be made to feel in her own mind the pleasure resulting from purchase, sales will the more easily and quickly be made.

2. *Laziness.* The statement that all people are lazy may be thought by some to be an exaggeration. This is not so. Even the most energetic people are unconsciously looking forward to the end of the day's work — to the time when their duties will be less irksome. Most people while *willing* to expend effort to secure desirable ends, appreciate any person or device making the end attainable without the effort or with less effort.

The average customer does not of course analyze minutely *why* she likes to trade in some stores and dislikes other stores. The real reasons for such preferences rest on the apparently most insignificant acts of salespeople. The salespeople in one store may always bring the goods to the customer while in another place of business the customer may have to come to the goods. Or, possibly, in one store the customer is always carefully seated before the goods are shown while in other business establishments this act of the salesperson is omitted.

Again, perhaps the customer is promptly met in one store and judiciously escorted to the department where her needs can be most punctiliously satisfied, while in some other store a great deal of energy is lost in searching for the merchandise desired. The pleasure and satisfaction of the customer in all cases varies directly with the degree to which effort in buying can be eliminated. Fatigue, irksomeness and discomfort are distasteful to people, while rested bodies and mental comfort resulting from intelligent service produce lasting favorable impressions of the store in the customer's mind. At a later time, when she is debating with herself as to where she will purchase, the favorable impression arising in her mind when thinking of a certain store may be the real cause for her making purchases in that store. Realization by salespeople that this all-powerful total impression that induces action is composed of many smaller impressions which they have had a part in the making, would tend to insure more careful handling of customers. One of the most favorable impressions that any store can make on a customer is the elimination of effort in buying, or at least its reduction to a minimum.

## CHAPTER V

## KNOWING THE CUSTOMER (*continued*)

In the previous chapter *likenesses* of customers were considered. Elements common to all people were reviewed in their relationship to selling goods. The present chapter has to do with the *differences* between customers, the elements that make it possible to classify people into groups for purposes of selling appeal. Both phases of knowing human nature (likenesses and differences) are extremely important for the retail salesperson.

Knowing the different types of customers is more often overlooked by the busy salesperson than is knowing the goods, possibly because the former knowledge is ostensibly of a less tangible or more fanciful character than the latter. In reality, however, careful observation by the salesperson of the customers passing through her department will reveal definite concrete information that can be used as a basis of selling appeals.

At first sight, the many customers coming under the salesperson's observation may appear to be very similar in reaction toward sales talks, but after continued analysis distinct types of individuals emerge from the mass and different methods of appealing to these different types present themselves. Emphasis must be placed on the necessity of analysis. Just as people very often do not see characteristics of goods which are in no way concealed, even though they are looking at these qualities,

so people actually fail to see or understand human beings notwithstanding the apparently obvious nature of their attributes. Study or analysis of people, as well as of goods, precedes an understanding of them.

It should be made clear at the start that it is impossible to classify all human beings between hard and fast limits. The different types of customers indicated at a subsequent place in this chapter do not adequately represent *all people at all times* but *some people at any moment of time.* In other words, a customer may be a certain type on one day and a different type at some other time. As environment or physical well-being changes, temperament undergoes an alteration and may result in reconstruction of the human type. Illustrations showing how salespeople may develop certain types of customers will be given later. Enough has been said at present if the salesperson realizes that human types are not necessarily stable although oftentimes such may be the case.

In the last analysis, the present discussion is only valuable for the salesperson if it indicates how to deal with the customer that stands before the counter *today* and does not theorize on how to deal with a hypothetical type that may appear tomorrow. Phrenology is omitted because its claims have long since been disproved. Character analysis is not emphasized because it harbors a large element of error and can be applied, even in its most simple aspects, only by those with training and power of nice discrimination. Thus, one writer on this subject says that an obstinate man usually has greater length between the chin and pate than between the hair line above the forehead and the nape of the neck. In what percentage of cases this assertion holds true, the writer has been unable to ascertain; but it is self-evident that ob-

stinacy, as a predominant characteristic in any customer, can be ascertained in a less cumbersome manner. *The way customers act* is the basis for the classification of customers here presented. Disregarding coloring, stature, texture of skin, shape of head, etc., it is believed that the customer's uppermost feelings and characteristics will become evident to the salesperson by carefully observing modes of conduct. Obstinacy will express itself by certain outward indications that are definite and can be relied upon. Deliberativeness, impulsiveness or other predominating traits can likewise be discovered without appeal to the bumps on the customer's head. What are the most common types of customers and how they can be discovered and appealed to will now be considered.

1. *The Impulsive or Nervous Customer.* The impulsive customer acts in response to her feelings which are uppermost in her. Her emotions are easily aroused and lead directly to action unless they are allowed to cool off. As a result, the impulsive customer must be rushed. When desire has once been created it must quickly be developed into decision, otherwise the feelings will become less intense and incapable of inducing action. Such types are very often "talked out of a sale" by uncomprehending salespeople.

As an illustration of what is meant is the story of Mark Twain's attendance at a missionary meeting. After listening to the missionary's plea for half an hour Mark decided that he would give a dollar to the cause when the collection plate came around — but the man kept on talking. At the end of three-quarters of an hour Mark decided that he would give only fifty cents. At the end of an hour he decided that he would give nothing; and finally, when the collection plate did come around

at the end of an hour and a half, Mark reached in and took out a dollar to recompense him for his inconvenience.

The impulsive customer is recognizable by means of her actions. She walks into the store in a quick, sometimes jerky manner. Her eyes are keen-looking; her expression is intense, oftentimes appearing strained. Her attitude indicates that she is in a hurry. She wants service *now* and appears fidgety until she gets it. This type commences sentences without finishing them and gives the impression that actions are initiated without consideration as to what they were intended to accomplish. Abruptness in speech and actions is characteristic of the impulsive customer.

How should this kind of person be approached and handled by the salesperson? Only too often the writer has seen this type approached in a slow indifferent manner. The sales talk has gone into detail and been dragged into great length. The customer has fidgeted and become impatient. In short, in such cases the salesperson has failed to understand the nature of the customer and has antagonized instead of attracted. The salesperson has failed to *create an environment around the customer favorable to selling;* for it must be remembered that it is within the possibilities of the salesperson to create the *conditions* under which goods are sold. The light, heat, fixtures and other conditions for selling may be favorable but all of these may be offset by an unsympathetic atmosphere created around the customer by the salesperson's methods. In such cases as these, sales talks and sales methods have not been individualized. They have become standardized for all customers.

The impulsive customer must be approached promptly and what she desires must be quickly ascertained (not by

asking questions) and found. As a rule no detail can be considered, but the principal selling points must be given in one, two, three order. The salesperson's manner must be alert, giving the customer the impression of activity. Any signs of uneasiness on the part of the customer should be quickly noted and new methods used to secure interest. Oftentimes this type likes those salespeople best who talk as rapidly as they do, but care must be taken not to augment the natural nervousness of the customer by too excited inquiry or talking. The least amount of friction possible should be the salesperson's aim in securing size, price, color, shape, etc., desired. To ask questions of this type very often disorganizes their unstable temperaments and creates impatience and general dissatisfaction. If the "machinery of selling" can be kept in the background, so much the better, because irritation is easily produced.

At this point the salesperson is no doubt wondering how some merchandise can be sold without asking questions. A hosiery salesperson presented the following problem to the writer: "I am selling men's, women's and children's hose. There are many different sizes of each as well as a variety of colors. When a customer comes up to the counter how can I know what to show her without asking questions?" Only apparently was this a difficult problem. From questioning the salesperson it was found that in a majority of cases the customer desired *women's* hose, color *black,* size *nine.* Of course in any particular case the salesperson could not be certain that black, women's hose, size nine was desired, but (and this is the important fact to note) if this kind of hose was presented to every customer, the salesperson would be right in a *majority* of cases — and without ask-

ing questions. In such case, the customer is impressed with the ease of buying — the absence of mechanism. Where something different than is being shown is demanded, the customer loses little time in voluntarily making known her needs; and what is more, the latter feels that she should have stated her needs instead of forcing the salesperson to work blindly. She does not condemn the salesperson for showing the wrong goods. Some drapery salespeople feel that it is necessary to ask questions in order to ascertain customers' needs. It has been demonstrated that questions can be dispensed with, not only in this line but in many others, and to the benefit of all parties concerned. The salesperson who can ascertain needs without the use of direct interrogation is using a principle of salesmanship that is too often overlooked, especially in dealing with the impulsive customer.

Since feelings are the motive to action with the impulsive customer, these should be appealed to in the most effective manner *at the start* of the sale. Decision must be induced quickly when the emotions are most completely functioning, otherwise their impelling nature loses influence over actions and the sale is lost. Long preliminaries must be dispensed with and the most vital selling points advanced in rapid succession. If the desire is created this type does not decide " to think it over "; it acts. Because, however, sales talks to this type must be brief, the salesperson should not be led to think that they are easier to construct and carry out. More often the short sales talk, pregnant with vital interest, having eliminated all meaningless terms, phrases and details, is harder to develop and convey to the customer than the longer and less poignant sales talk adapted to other types.

Because the impulsive customer is motivated by strong

feelings and often buys on the spur of the moment, the salesperson has a responsibility in dealing with this type that does not exist to such an extent when selling other kinds of customers. Great care must be taken to be certain that the goods are adapted to the customer's wants and that they will be entirely satisfactory after the immediate enthusiasm for them has receded. Unless this is done "come backs" will be frequent from this type. Their desire for an article oftentimes disappears after reflection. If the salesperson can use reflection for the customer the latter usually appreciates it if it is done tactfully. It is easy to *dispose* of goods to impulsive people but *selling* them goods is another matter. Goods are not sold until they are *consumed*, hence a sale can only be justified if the goods give off *lasting satisfactions*. To completely visualize the future relationships between the goods and the purchaser is especially necessary when selling to an impulsive customer although it is to be desired in selling to any type.

2. *The Deliberate Customer.* This type is the opposite of the impulsive or nervous customer. The deliberate customer may have strong feelings but they are kept well under control. Purchases are made only after careful deliberation which views the proposition from different standpoints and weighs the advantages against the disadvantages. Hasty action and decision are distasteful, and any attempt by the salesperson to hurry the sale will be resented. Ideas make an effective appeal to this type only when they are advanced slowly and in logical order. Explanations may often be detailed. Oftentimes, even after careful consideration and when the mind is made up, this type will postpone action until it is "doubly certain." Procrastination is characteristic of

deliberative customers and nothing is gained by trying to rush them. They must have time "to think it over."

How can this type be distinguished? Deliberate people are deliberate in their movements. They walk slowly and in a dignified manner. Their facial expression is calm, poised. Gestures are uncommon but if existing tend to be slow and inconspicuous. Extreme excitement or expressed enthusiasm are absent, as is also the tendency to jump at conclusions. Ability and willingness to listen to a long sales talk dealing with details, distinguishes sharply this type from the impulsive one. All of these external modes of conduct, from the moment the customer steps in the door until she is absorbed in the sales talk, have a meaning for the intelligent salesperson and are indicators of the correct method of handling.

Only recently the writer witnessed an example of handling this type in the wrong way. A deliberative man began looking at hats half an hour before closing time in a men's furnishings store. After several hats had been tried on, one seemed to gain his interest. The salesperson concentrated his efforts on this one for some time but although it was plain the customer admired this hat and desired it, he hesitated to decide. Finally, he remarked, "Well, I will think it over and come in and see you tomorrow." The salesperson who up to this time had not been especially aggressive now became conspicuously desirous of getting an immediate decision. He explained reasons why decision should not be postponed and attempted to rush the sale. Suddenly, picking up his hat, the customer exclaimed, "I guess I don't want a hat," and left the store. The writer followed him, introduced himself and asked how he liked the store. He

replied, " Oh, the store may be alright, but they always seem to rub a fellow the wrong way."

Here is one case among many where the salesperson failed to create an environment around the customer favorable for sales. The store was a good store carrying excellent lines, but human nature, the big element for which the store existed, was not understood. Methods, admirable when used on an impulsive customer, proved to be disastrous when applied to the deliberative type. If the salesperson had understood the workings of this customer's mind he would have realized that the chances were greatly in favor of the return of the customer next day, and that urging and rushing would be dangerous tactics to use. As it was, the salesperson blamed the customer for wanting to get out of the store without buying, while the customer felt that the store was altogether too anxious to get his money regardless of service rendered.

Salespeople often " wait " for customers of this type to buy when in reality the customer is " waiting " for the salesperson to sell. A most pitiful scene in a retail store is to see a salesperson give two or three selling points to this type and then " wait." Very often the selling points given are only generalities. The deliberate customer's mind cannot decide until enough information has been given to enable a buying judgment to be formed. Here is an opportunity for the salesperson to give the history, make, construction, style, design and other information about the article. Usually such knowledge will be intently listened to. The customer must be helped to decide by providing material on which a logical decision may be based. Reason must be fed; feelings are in the background. If there are logical reasons why the deliberate

customer should buy, she will buy if these are presented. But these reasons must exist for her — in her mind — and not merely in some one else's. If embarrassment before this type is not to ensue, it is imperative that the salesperson should know all about the goods.[1]

With adequate knowledge at one's command it is easy to interest and sell the deliberate customer. She is attentive and anxious to see the real value of the goods. She is appreciative of the salesperson who is patient and painstaking in the presentation of the facts, and who allows her the freedom of decision at a later time if she cares for it. With a little tact and study the deliberate customer can be made a permanent customer, even though goods are not always sold on the day that they are looked at. The point to be remembered is, this type is *thinking,* not jumping at conclusions; and if the store, the salesperson and the goods are all right, little fear need exist that trade will not be secured. With the impulsive type, however, sales are made on the basis of immediate impressions, not on subsequent reasoning; and unless a sale is made when the customer is before the salesperson it will not be made later. Ready adaptation to these opposite types of customers is the mark of the efficient, scientific salesperson.

3. *The Vacillating or Indecisive Customer.* This type has great difficulty in making decisions. Even though an object is intensely desired and is capable of being purchased by the vacillating customer, hesitation ensues and often indefinite postponement of decision. Going for an evening stroll this type sometimes has difficulty in deciding which direction to go or which fork of a road to take. In fact, decision to the vacillating person is

[1] See Chapters II and III.

painful. This is so because it consumes a great deal of energy; for anything that is not naturally accomplished takes effort to perform. Unconsciously, friends decide numerous everyday problems for this type, which if left to them for decision would entail much irksome effort. Because of this unrealized service performed, vacillating people admire the more positive types who have something they lack, viz., power of decision. Unlike the deliberative type, vacillating customers do not postpone decision because they want to think over the proposition from all viewpoints, but rather because *they cannot decide*. The ability to make the will function is here lacking; further thought on the subject may only tend to impress the vacillating type with its own weakness.

The vacillating customer can oftentimes be singled out before she gets to the counter. Indecisiveness of the mind expresses itself through the actions. Bodily movements are somewhat aimless; the manner is undecided and wavering; the facial expression is timid and apprehensive. The whole impression given is one of hesitation. This kind of a customer does not quite know just which department she wishes to go to first, and in case she starts toward one, a second later she may decide to retrace her steps and go to another.

In case the salesperson has not had an opportunity to observe the customer before the latter gets to the counter, quick observation will disclose at least some of the characteristics of the vacillating customer. The latter shifts from one article to another making it more difficult for a decision to be formed. She does not seem to respond as readily to the sales talk as do the deliberative and impulsive types. She often seems somewhat afraid of the salesperson and the goods, as if foreboding some trouble.

When the time comes to close the sale this type shows an inability to decide between different goods or to purchase at all. Such customers give the impression that they lack confidence in their own judgment, and naturally such a feeling tends to further impair their will power.

The reader has no doubt deduced from the foregoing the proper method of dealing with the vacillating customer. Decide for her. Do for her what it is not natural for her to do. Supplement her personality with yours. And yet do this without it being evident. Perhaps this seems difficult to accomplish but it is not necessarily so. The writer has seen some very intelligent methods used in retail stores to accomplish this desired end. In the first place, concentration of attention must be secured, which means the elimination of all goods excepting those especially desirable for the customer's needs. Next, an interesting, convincing, but not too aggressive sales talk on the articles exhibited brings the customer one step nearer the sale — from indecision between different articles, to indecision whether or not to buy at all the one most desirable. Some methods commonly used to get the vacillating customer to make up her mind are: (a) placing the goods aside as if decision had been made; (b) beginning to make out the sales check; (c) asking some question that will imply decision has been made, as, "How many yards will you require?" "Have you a charge account or do you wish to pay for it?" "Will you take it with you or shall we send it?" (d) beginning to measure goods, placing them in the parcel-carrier, or starting to wrap them up.

Such devices for inducing decision are very effective in getting the vacillating customer to purchase, but they must be used with care. The salesperson should be quite

certain of the type. A customer not at all of this indecisive type, when asked by a salesperson, "How many yards did you say you would need?" replied spiritedly, "I didn't say that I needed any yards." The obstinate or more positive types resent keenly any attempts on the part of salespeople to decide for them. If the salesperson feels that she must decide for these types she must do so in a way that will not be apparent. A wrong diagnosis of a customer often causes more friction than if no diagnosis had been made, yet this is no reason for the elimination of diagnosing human nature. It merely means that great care should be exercised in applying some methods of selling when the salesperson is uncertain as to the type. Mistakes are certain to be made but it is far better to learn human nature even though some errors are encountered in the process than to standardize human nature and deal with customers in a cut and dried fashion. The latter method is only too often used and is unfortunate not only in that it encourages friction in selling but because it makes selling monotonous, mechanical and lacking in spirit. Variety of action produces pleasure, and pleasure develops enthusiasm — one of the most valuable qualities in any work. Decide on the type and then apply the rules.

If the salesperson understands the vacillating person's make up, there will be no hesitation in deciding for the customer or in using some device to produce decision. To wait for this type to decide is to cause dissatisfaction. The vacillating customer is accustomed to having people decide for her and unless they do she has a feeling of helplessness. She obviously must purchase goods somewhere, and the store that will secure her business is the one where *it is made easy for her to buy*, where less irksome effort

is necessary. Customers go to stores where the *environment* is favorable for buying; and when different types of customers trade at every store, part of the environment (that produced by the salespeople) must be changed to meet the different demands (conscious or unconscious) of the various types of customers. Selling environment must be capable of change if it is to be uniformly effective.

4. *The Confident or Decisive Customer.* The opposite of the indecisive, vacillating customer is the decisive, confident customer. This kind of customer, in her own estimation at least, knows what she wants and all about the goods. Perhaps she has found herself fortunate in the past when relying upon her own judgment; possibly in some cases she has discovered that she knew more about goods than the people selling them. A certain cock-sureness has thus developed that dominates her actions. She will not tolerate salespeople who assume to know more than she does, neither will she be dictated to by them. She prides herself on her cleverness and is offended if salespeople do not recognize her merit. Overconfidence is the dominant characteristic of the confident customer, which, fortunately for the salesperson, leaves her off her guard and opens up vulnerable avenues of approach that should be eagerly attacked. This feeling of security is a variety of vanity [1] which seeks recognition and suffers materially unless it receives it. It is the duty of the salesperson to satisfy this craving in a manner that will make buying a pleasure.

The confident customer can be distinguished by her bearing and attitude. She walks into the store as a general would march into the camp of a defeated enemy.

[1] See page 68.

She has an assurance in her manner and a general appearance that indicates hopefulness and confidence in herself. When looking at merchandise this type usually has decided views and no reluctance in stating them. The confident customer enjoys taking the initiative away from the salesperson and telling what she knows about the goods. She exhibits pleasure when the salesperson asks her "opinion" on any matter.

This type is one of the easiest to sell. Subtle flattery and agreement with what they have to say gives them pleasure and makes it easy for them to buy. Confident customers should be encouraged to tell the salesperson all about the merchandise and its good qualities. Stimulated by smiles and respect for their opinions these customers will sell themselves the goods. Their advice should be solicited on any mooted point and everything said to minister to their self-esteem. Let them express any information they may possess; they will feel better. A salesperson should never argue or dispute the statement of any type of customer, especially not of this particular type. Such a course of action would prove suicidal. If the salesperson *does* know more about the goods than the confident customer the latter should not be disillusioned. Confident people do not like to be disillusioned.

Sometimes salespeople forget their true function. Instead of selling goods they attempt to reconstruct human nature. Illustrating this, a salesperson was heard to exclaim after a customer had left her department, "I took her down a notch or two; she thought she knew everything." It must be emphasized that people do not like to be "taken down." If they think they are of great account and their opinions are valuable, why should the salesperson attempt to make them think less of them-

selves? People do not take pleasure in thinking less of themselves; and it must be remembered that customers trade only where buying is the most pleasurable. No salesperson would think of stepping on the toes of a customer because the latter had big feet, neither would she hold a mirror before an unattractive customer and call attention to her apparent handicap. Why then should not characteristics of customers, which are just as much a part of them as their physical features, be shown due respect and consideration? To show lack of sympathy and respect for the customer's sensibilities is just as inconsiderate as to inflict physical injury, and what is most important, loses sales.

Too many salespeople would like to have customers "different" than they are. Many of us would prefer different conditions than those in which we labor. However, it is not what we desire but what exists in reality that counts and should determine our methods of work. Perhaps confident customers *should not* be so confident, but what satisfaction does such an admission give the salesperson? It does not register sales; it does not bring promotion. The latter desirable ends can only be secured by selling goods *under the conditions* that exist, and to the different kinds of human nature found in customers. Adapting oneself to circumstances is the secret of the salesperson who successfully sells different types of customers. If buying can be made a pleasure for confident customers by letting them give their opinions, even though they may not know much about the merchandise, let them do so. The confident customer will sell herself if given half a chance. Do not stand in her way. Help her convince herself.

5. *The Talkative or Friendly Customer.* The talka-

tive customer needs little description as she can be distinguished by her friendly attitude and inclination to talk on many subjects. This type is closely allied to the preceding one but differs in this respect, that she talks merely to be saying something rather than with a definite object in view. Also this type is more social and lacks the confidence of the former type. Being friendly by nature talkative customers buy where there is the most complete opportunity for expression of their feelings. They cannot bring themselves to trade at stores where gruff and unsympathetic salespeople wait on them. They must have an outlet for their personalities, and like other types desire to buy where buying is a pleasure. They desire a peculiar environment for their purchasing and the salesperson must create the kind of atmosphere desired.

At first sight, it would appear that handling this type is an easy matter. In reality, however, it is often most difficult. Not that it is difficult for the salesperson to reciprocate friendliness and sociability, for this is usually quite easy. The real difficulty in dealing with this type is to be friendly and yet sell the maximum amount of goods. Talkative customers, if given a chance, often talk themselves out of a sale. They change the subject of conversation abruptly and it takes a good deal of tact and determination on the part of the salesperson to get back to the selling talk. But this must be done, and without letting the customer know that it is being done. Different salespeople use different methods for accomplishing this. One method is to give new unmentioned qualifications of the merchandise as a sort of afterthought, such as, " By the way, I forgot to tell you, etc." Sometimes this type of customer has a good deal of confidence in herself and if directed back to the subject will act like

the confident customer and use her talking ability to talk herself into a sale. The point to be emphasized is that the talkative customer's conversation must be unobservedly controlled and directed into channels favorable to sales. Unless this is done, this type of customer will talk herself tired, thus producing unfavorable conditions for making sales.

The salesperson selling this type needs a great deal of patience. The friendly customer must oftentimes be listened to on many topics before she can be induced to give attention to a sales talk. But this should be done since the prosperity of the business depends on the ability of the salespeople to keep customers satisfied and happy. It may take as long to sell the talkative customer as it does to sell the deliberative type, but it does not pay to encroach too much on what she has to say any more than it is profitable to rush the deliberative customer. But patience does not imply neglect of duty. The salesperson should be careful not to become too absorbed in what the customer is saying so as to overlook the necessity of planning the sales campaign and initiating it. The salesperson can do much constructive planning while apparently listening to what the customer has to say. If this is done, the first opening for a sales talk can be appropriately utilized and the conversation directed to the merchandise. Be friendly to the friendly customer but do not let friendliness defeat sales. Make sociability and talkativeness means toward sales and not ends in and of themselves.

6. *The Silent or Indifferent Customer.* This type is the reverse of the talkative customer. No matter how enthusiastic the salesperson and how interesting the sales talk, this kind of customer shows recognition of neither.

She is as silent as the Sphinx. It is especially difficult to handle such a situation intelligently because the salesperson cannot know where to concentrate the sales talk. When customers enthuse or criticize the goods shown them, sales talks may be adapted to the demands of the situation. But when the customer says nothing, does not respond to the efforts to interest her, the situation becomes more complicated.

Since speech does not exist as a clew to the customer's likes and dislikes, other means of ascertaining desires must be discovered. Facial expression and actions may indicate merchandise most favored, as well as whether interest centers in quality, price, utility, beauty, etc. Bodily expressions should then be watched carefully, for where it is not customary for the mental process to disclose itself in speech, it is probable that its nature will be exhibited on the face and in the eagerness with which some pieces of merchandise are handled as compared with others.

This latter point is illustrated by a certain druggist who sells brushes. A man came into his store and asked to look at hair-brushes. The druggist brought out about a dozen, priced from one to five dollars. The customer picked them up one by one and then replaced them on the counter, the druggist all the while giving an interesting sales talk but the customer saying nothing. Finally, without any apparent reason for doing so, the druggist removed from the counter all excepting two brushes, a four and a five dollar one. The sales talk was now concentrated on these when presently the customer said, " I'll take this one," holding up the five dollar brush. These were the first words uttered by the customer with the exception of those asking to look at brushes. An ob-

server of this startling transaction stepped up to the druggist after the customer had left the store with his purchase, and exclaimed, "How in the world did you know which brushes he liked?" "That was easy," replied the druggist. "Do you see that fine white line painted across the counter? Well, the brushes the customer was most interested in he more reluctantly parted with, and placed them on the counter partly over the white line; while those he did not desire were placed completely on the other side of the white line, farthest away from him."

Besides the observation of bodily expressions, the salesperson must break down the customer's reserve and make her talk without obviously appearing to do so. This can often be done by asking questions that require more detailed answers than "yes" and "no." Perhaps the customer's opinion respecting the merchandise may be solicited. By such friendly inquiries this type of customer is led out of her seclusion. Once having voiced an opinion it is easier for others to follow, and soon there is the usual give and take between buyer and seller which gives a clew to desires. Only in exceptional cases will a customer of this type openly insult the salesperson by refusing to answer a question. When this does occur the salesperson should overlook the apparent insult and proceed further to interest the customer in the merchandise. Sooner or later, patient efforts to sell this extreme type will be rewarded.

Unfortunately, silence on the part of the customer often antagonizes the salesperson or makes her unduly anxious or disheartened. This should not be the case. If the customer is silent by nature no insult is intended for the salesperson. Since human nature cannot be made

over in the short space of time at the salesperson's disposal, the latter must deal with this type as she finds her, and not as she wishes her to be. This type, like all the others, must of necessity purchase goods, and she will go to that store where the environment produced by the salesperson is best adapted to her personality. Unfriendliness, exasperation, sourness or other negative qualities, if exhibited by salespeople, will not produce the environment the silent customer likes. Adapting oneself to circumstances is one of the prime requisites of salesmanship. Only careful study of different situations can produce this desirable quality.

Sometimes silence is not a natural trait but a defensive pose. Timid people or those afraid to give up too readily to salespeople's opinions may use silence as a guard against unwise buying. They are reluctant to concur too readily as they think it might affect their own judgment or possibly impair their interests. They do not want to appear too "easy." Professional buyers often pose thus in order to get a better price.

It is safe to assume with this type as with others that they came into the store and to the department primarily because they considered buying. If such customers are afraid to let down the bars of their judgment and express their opinions, the salesperson should endeavor to convince them so thoroughly respecting the merchandise that their judgments will logically register in favor of the salesperson's presentation. No impatience should be exhibited because the customer has chosen to use this device, any more than disgust should be apparent if the customer is not cleanly, well clothed, or has some physical deformity. Customers have a right to their personalities.

Salespeople cannot and should not try to change them. They must adapt themselves to them.

7. *The Distrustful Customer.* Some persons are laboring under the impression that any one who tries to sell them anything is dishonest. Especially do they believe this of the retailer. These people come to a store in a watchful, distrustful frame of mind, and are constantly looking for attempts to cheat them. Perhaps this feeling of suspicion has arisen because they have been deceived in the past; perhaps this attitude is natural. But whether this attitude comes from nature or environment makes little difference to the salesperson. All she is concerned with is the fact that it exists and must be tactfully dealt with.

This type can usually be discovered by the cynical manner in which they inspect goods, and often by a sneer appearing around the base of the nose and the lips when the salesperson makes statements regarding merchandise. Distrustful customers often walk in a stealthy way as if they were tracing down some clew to a murder. They have a tendency to pick out apparent flaws in the goods or inconsistencies in the sales talk. They pride themselves on knowing the so-called "tricks of the trade." Sometimes they will be frank enough to say that they do not believe the claims made for the goods. More often, however, this feeling will be expressed through facial expression and the general attitude exhibited toward the salesperson and the goods.

The distrustful person can be successfully sold by the use of several methods. In the first place, the customer must be inspired with confidence in the salesperson. One of the most effective ways of gaining this end is to state

obvious facts in the description of the goods. Doing this causes the customer to agree. When she has once agreed with anything that the salesperson has said it is much easier for her to agree to something else less obviously true that may be said regarding the merchandise. Showing obvious facts in the description of goods thus forms the basis for future agreement — a most desirable end especially when dealing with a suspicious nature. In the second place, this type believes her eyes more than she does her ears. Hence, the sales talk should be supplemented by demonstrations. Prove, by using the merchandise, that it will do what is claimed for it. Better yet, induce the customer to test it herself. She will convince herself where others will fail. Unfortunately, demonstrations are not used enough with any type of customer but certainly not with the distrustful type. In the third place, bring in authority to substantiate your own assertions. Have some neighbor friends of the customer made some favorable comment regarding the goods? If so, the distrustful customer will believe them rather than the salesperson. Perhaps some noted authority has recommended the article and possibly this advice has appeared in some book, newspaper or magazine. All evidence of an impartial nature should be presented in order to secure the customer's confidence.

With an extremely suspicious customer a further more radical method may be used, especially at the beginning of the sales talk. This is pointing out the more obvious defects in the goods, or admitting that the goods are not perfect in every detail. Such tactics are so unusual that the distrustful customer's mind is immediately disorganized. The wind is taken out of her sails. What she was going to do herself the salesperson has done. If

imperfections that she would have overlooked are pointed out, the customer is extremely grateful and is soon won over to a thorough belief in the honesty of the salesperson. Then, if the imperfections are minimized by complete portrayal of the positive features, the customer's mind is diverted from the negative considerations and sales can be made. Confidence is the only basis for sales, and if it does not exist in a customer it must be produced. This bold method of producing confidence in the minds of distrustful customers has often been used effectively by the writer. The suspicious customer is easily sold by the method of showing the worst side first. As stated elsewhere, ascertain the type and then apply the rules. Results will be in proportion to the tact with which they are applied.

As a rule, salespeople only reluctantly deal with suspicious customers. They seem to take the customer's distrust as a personal insult. They resent the suspicious attitude. The only result of such actions is to make the customer more suspicious. When this type of customer is not sold she often comes to the unwarranted conclusion that she did not buy because of traces of trickery. In reality, all that she may have found was an inefficient salesperson, but that does not help the matter. She goes to some other store where she can get the pleasant sensation of buying and being satisfied. The salesperson should always remember that the suspicious customer will be sold by *somebody*.

There are many other types of customers but the ones given are the most common and easily recognized. As already indicated, the salesperson should be careful not to consider these types always distinct and as representing certain people at all times. Some customers are im-

pulsive when buying inexpensive merchandise but deliberative when contemplating a larger purchase; some are impulsive in the morning and deliberative toward evening; some are impulsive or deliberative as dictated by other conditions. Again, a customer may be suspicious in one store but not in another, with some salespeople but not with others in the same store. Deliberative, impulsive and other types may show strong evidences of suspicion under certain circumstances. Still further, a customer may be a confident type in a department where she is intimately acquainted with the goods but may exhibit vacillating characteristics in other departments.

Thus it is seen that conditions of environment, physical well-being, size of purchase, time of day, former experiences, etc., may alter people's feelings and change their predominating characteristics of action at any moment of time. People are often combinations of types, and yet notwithstanding this fact it is still important to remember that distinct types do exist. Some customers are fundamentally vacillating *at all times,* or confident, or impulsive. The important lesson for the salesperson to remember is this: that no matter what type a customer has been in the past or will be tomorrow she is a distinct type *now,* and what type she represents can be distinguished by her actions.

In conclusion, salesmanship may be said to be the creation of an environment around a customer favorable for selling. It is making buying pleasurable for customers by dealing with them as their individual characteristics dictate. Salesmanship is conditioned upon ready adjustment of sales methods to widely differing types of customers. It is in reality *adjustment to circumstances,* which constitutes service. The ability to create this

*environment* or *adjustment* is secured through careful and painstaking study of human nature. The store should be considered a school where opportunities are offered salespeople to make such a study and to secure an intimate knowledge of human nature. Without such knowledge the salesperson can never hope to advance far in her profession.

## CHAPTER VI

## ELEMENTS OF PERSONALITY

Personality is that which constitutes distinction of person. It is a composite thing made up of many qualities, negative in some persons, positive in others and a combination of both in still others. Personalities in which negative qualities or traits predominate are of little use to society. They represent the failures in life: criminals, insane and degenerates. Personalities in which the positive qualities predominate are reflected in the people around us, those who are more or less successful in their respective occupations. The person completely dominated by positive qualities is the most complete success.

To become the most complete success in her calling by the development of personality, is the privilege and duty of every salesperson; privilege, because the salesperson cannot get the most out of life either in material or immaterial satisfaction without a deeply and broadly developed personality; duty, because the employer has a right to expect not only efficient service but service *ever increasing* in efficiency. The salesperson unwilling to develop her personality will soon go into the discard, at least so far as positions in first class stores are concerned.

There is no such thing as standing still in personality. Either progress is being made or else there is retrogression. A store with progressive ideas realizes this fundamental truth and cannot afford to keep within its organi-

zation any elements of decay lest the infection of stagnation spread throughout its entire system. Development is the law of modern business and progress.

An attractive and business-getting personality is a composition of three factors: neat, clean, attractive dress; a healthy body; and a combination of certain positive qualities or attributes, viz., enthusiasm, honesty, tact, self-command, courtesy, cheerfulness, promptness, memory, sympathy and initiative. The first two factors while very important cannot be considered in this book, but the last one, separated into its component parts, is here taken up for discussion.

## ENTHUSIASM

Enthusiasm in a salesperson is the quality that makes her give her sales talk in an intense and earnest way that carries conviction. The enthusiastic salesperson spontaneously overflows with confidence in herself, and belief in the goods and the satisfactions they hold for the customer. Confidence can only be secured by knowledge: knowledge of one's own ability, of the customer, of the goods, and of the selling process.

Enthusiasm based on confidence begets confidence and enthusiasm in the customer. It is contagious. The salesperson with enough confidence in her goods and herself to become enthusiastic, soon brings others to see her point of view. Sincerity, reflected by enthusiasm, is impressive and will command the attention and respect even of customers unable to share in her belief.

Enthusiasm backed by facts is a combination of the spiritual and the material. The latter lacks life without the former while the former is hollow hypocrisy without the latter. Enthusiasm cannot be faked. Without a

background of knowledge and belief it stands forth in all its shallow futility. Counterfeit enthusiasm can never pass for the genuine for it lacks in weight, sound and appearance. A salesperson who attempts to be earnest and eager in her sales talk will fool no one excepting herself. Only by intelligent observation, reflection and study can the salesperson create a harmonious background for the efficient functioning of enthusiasm.

Not only does enthusiasm stimulate self-respect and enhance the customer's esteem for the salesperson, but it also develops loyalty for the house and its methods. To be loyal to a sales institution a salesperson must have confidence in its integrity and belief in its policies. Enthusiasm developed from knowing the goods will go far toward developing loyalty to the house that handles those goods. Further knowledge regarding the store's history, its aims and ambitions, will generate new enthusiasm which will form the basis for a broader and stronger loyalty.

Perhaps it is not too obvious to note that loyalty to a store can only be based on its honest and square dealing. Truthful advertising, honest representations by salespeople and sympathetic treatment of customers' needs are some of the foundation stones for the building of the loyalty structure. Some firms that deserve it do not get it from *all* salespeople, but no firm that does not deserve it ever wins it from *any* salesperson.

What is loyalty? It is devotion to the store's ideals and to those who are trying to realize them. It is a duty that each salesperson owes to the store for which she works, a duty based on knowledge of the complete service rendered to the community. A loyal salesperson will not adversely criticize the store, its methods, its rules or

policies before customers or the general public. She will not bemoan her lack of recognition by the store management, realizing that merit is compensated when fully evident. She will do nothing to injure or neutralize her store's best interests even though such action may apparently be to her advantage. She realizes that to knock the store is to knock herself, since she is part of the store. All salespeople should have a feeling of admiration for the store in which they are working or else seek opportunities elsewhere. Disloyalty can never be justified within an organization because sincerity would thereby be violated. Sincerity can only be preserved by withdrawing from any association the ideals or policies of which are contrary to one's dictates of right dealing. And, it must be remembered, sincerity is at the basis of enthusiasm; it of all qualities must be preserved.

What has been said does not preclude helpful criticism of the store. This is always solicited by progressive managers and where it is not directly solicited by others its acceptability will be recognized if sufficient tact is displayed by the salesperson submitting it. Constructive criticism is the only kind of criticism of any value and this is of doubtful value unless called to the attention of those whose position equips them to profit by it. Loyalty to the stores does not exclude this latter form of criticism — it demands it.

Enthusiasm can be developed by making work enjoyable. People are only enthusiastic about those things that create a pleasurable sensation in them, hence the necessity of removing the real or imaginary aspects of drudgery and monotony from sales work. Lack of interest or a feeling of monotony results when an operation becomes mechanical — when the salesperson becomes an

automaton. Automatism is the natural development of ignorance; ignorance of store history, ideals and policies; ignorance of inspiring facts about the goods; ignorance of any definite scheme of procedure in selling; ignorance of self-analysis. From such desert soil only hardy weeds can grow: lack of interest, a feeling that the work is monotonous, and general unhappiness.

The only work that can truthfully be called monotonous is that which requires repeated effort of the same kind and quality without variation. Such is the operation of wrapping oleomargarine in the packing plants. Here a girl stands all day in one position and performs the repeated operation of taking cakes of oleomargarine from an endless belt in front of her, putting each of them in a separate box taken from a receptacle at her right, and then transferring the package to another endless belt at her left.

Work of such a monotonous character is unknown to the retail store. Here the chief factor is the human one which is the most variable of elements that any worker could deal with. Customers are different from each other and the same customers are different at different times; the salesperson herself partakes of the same characteristics; any article has innumerable talking points and seldom can two successive sales talks on the same article be identical because of the varying element — the customer; there are many qualities of the same article as well as many articles in any one department; multiply these possibilities for variety of action by all the articles in the store (where salespeople can sell out of their department), and by all the different types of customers and the varying moods of each type, and by the changing mental and physical conditions of the salesperson herself — and

work with greater possibilities for variety of action and constant adjustment to new conditions cannot easily be imagined.

Only does monotony exist in sales work when it exists in the mind of the salesperson, when she *makes* each operation, each selling talk, identical with every other one and regards all customers capable of similar handling. When a salesperson disregards the possibility for variation of operation, the work does become monotonous *for her,* but she is not fair in calling her work monotonous in the usual meaning of the term. Paradise would be renamed by those unfitted to appreciate its happiness.

To adapt one's self to one's environment, to vary one's operations where varying operations are necessary to adequately meet conditions, to replace ignorance by knowledge, to develop loyalty and faithfulness, are the privileges and duties of every salesperson, and are rewarded by material satisfactions but above all by happiness — the generator of enthusiasm.

## HONESTY

Honesty is fairness and straightforwardness in conduct, thought and speech. It is the opposite of fraud and misrepresentation. A salesperson is honest when she is fair in her dealings with the customer, upright with herself and trustworthy to her employer. Anything less than this trinity of honorable dealings cannot be called honesty.

If salespeople were to critically analyze themselves for honesty in the light of the above definition, many of them who believed themselves entitled to a clean bill in this respect would be disappointed. Some of their common modes of conduct would appear unfair to their em-

ployer and to the customer while certain trends of thought would be recognized as unjust to their own development.

A salesperson is not honest with her employer, the customer or herself if she is not efficient in her work. Some salespeople indicate by their actions that it is nobody's business whether or not they are experts in their line. Only a few shoe salespeople that the writer has met seemed to think it their duty to know something about the construction of the human foot. Because of such an attitude many persons are ill-fitted; they are unfairly dealt with; they have paid for service but have not received it; in other words, they have been deceived. Of course, in a great many cases the public have learned through experience not to expect expert service in retail stores and if they do not receive it are not disappointed. However, a large portion of this class have ceased to buy from the retailer where they have had to pay for something that was not given them, and instead have become purchasers from mail order houses where prices are lower because the services of (1) letting the customer see and handle the goods, (2) telling her all that she wants to know about the article, (3) expertly fitting garments to her individual peculiarities, and (4) prompt delivery, cannot be offered because of the nature of the business — and are not expected by the customer. With all these handicaps, still the mail order houses have built up a reputation for honesty and fairness because they have given what they represented to give whether little or much.

Nevertheless, two-thirds of the people in the United States still patronize the retailer in the hope that they will get the service that they pay for and for which they long. Hence it is to be assumed that if any customer does not receive the facts wished for, or fails to get the

fit desired, she is disappointed and feels that the store has not treated her fairly, that is, has not been honest with her; since by hypothesis, she would not be a retail customer if she were not anticipating and ready to pay for some services other than those given by the mail order houses. To keep faith with the customer who wants service and is willing to pay for it, is the duty of the salesperson. She cannot be considered honest in the fullest meaning of the term unless she does so.

Besides dishonesty due to lack of knowledge and skill, which robs the customer of service and reacts unfavorably upon the store and salesperson, is the dishonesty arising from idleness on the part of salespeople. Gossiping, lounging and loitering seem to be the pastimes of some salespeople between sales. Although they are hired to work the *entire* period between certain hours each day, one would think, to see their utter relaxation and abandonment after each sale, that they were hired to work *only* when a customer appeared before them. The stock for these reasons is not kept arranged and in good order, shortages are often overlooked, cleanliness becomes subordinated to matters of lesser importance, and many other errors are made, any one of which would result in injustice to the customer, unfaithfulness to the store, and so far as bad habits of conduct are developed, injury to the salespeople themselves.

The kind of dishonesty usually thought of in regard to retail stores is that of misrepresentation of goods. Misrepresentation may be intentional or unintentional and may be concerned with the manufacture, construction, purpose, operation, composition or durability of any article.

Whether the misrepresentation is intentional or other-

wise — the effect on the customer is the same. When the truth is ultimately ascertained from use of the article, distrust of the store and the salesperson results. From the standpoint of the customer, if the salesperson did not know the facts she should not have practiced deception by giving an appearance of knowledge in order to tide over an immediate embarrassment. Far better would it have been for her to have exhibited ignorance than to have bluffed. On the other hand, if the salesperson intentionally misrepresented in order to effect a sale, when the facts become known as they always do, the extent of the repulsion on the part of the customer for the store can hardly be realized. Thus it is seen that misstatement or misrepresentation of facts, intentionally or unintentionally done, amounts to about the same thing for the customer because she is the loser thereby; and the salesperson can justly be condemned in either case although from an impartial standpoint not to the same degree. But it must be remembered that the customer is not as a rule " impartial " but is willing to impute ulterior motives to the salesperson. Expert knowledge is necessary to avoid " an appearance of evil."

Misrepresentation of *construction* has caused many disgruntled customers and destroyed millions of dollars of good will. A customer inquired from a furniture dealer the price of a mahogany bed-room suit that was displayed in the window. She was told that it sold for $135.00. On being asked whether the suit was all-mahogany, the salesperson replied that a solid mahogany suit could not be purchased for that price; that the side rails and inconspicuous parts of the chairs were birch but matched perfectly with the mahogany; that the mahogany was a veneer but was so perfectly applied that it

could not be detected excepting by an expert; that it would last a life-time. The customer seemed a little disappointed on receiving this information as she thought the style of the furniture ideal and had made up her mind that it was a solid all-mahogany suit. Several days later the same customer returned to this furniture store and purchased the suit in question. She told the salesperson that she had gone to another furniture store where a suit represented to be solid and all-mahogany was offered for $150.00. The customer was perplexed and believed that the salesperson in the first store had misrepresented the facts. To make certain she called up a friend who knew furniture and had him come down with her and decide on the case. The furniture proved to be veneered and supplemented by birch in inconspicuous parts. The customer was indignant at the deception, and although the dealer protested that he had purchased it for solid mahogany she left the store after accusing him of intentional deception. Her friends soon heard of the affair and those who were customers of this store transferred their trade elsewhere.

Another case of misrepresentation of construction was called to the writer's attention a short time ago. Two friends had purchased 14-inch lawn mowers from two different stores, one paying $6.00 and the other $8.50. Talking about their mowers some time later the prices were disclosed, the difference in price causing surprise and dissatisfaction on the part of the man who had paid the highest amount. After some reflection this man said, "But mine has ball-bearings." "So has mine," replied the other, "because I asked the salesperson that question in particular. He didn't seem to know much about it but felt sure about the ball-bearings. In fact, I be-

lieve he said that all lawn mowers had ball-bearings." "Well, if he said that," returned the first man, "he was wrong. Let's take it apart and find out." So the mower was analyzed and found to be ball-bearingless. The lawn mower was returned and in spite of the fact that the retailer tried to explain away the mistake by saying the salesperson was "green," the customer never went back to that store.

Cases innumerable could be related illustrating misrepresentation of construction, always resulting in loss of customers' confidence and not only their patronage but often that of their friends. In respect to authentic information regarding construction of goods, the mail order houses are far in advance of the average retailer. This reliability of statement is not voluntary on their part but is imposed by law since the mails transmit their sales talk and the mails cannot be used for misstatement or fraud. But whatever the reason, accurate statements regarding construction exist and are one of the chief reasons for the immense good will that these establishments have built up in the last few years.

Misrepresentation of the *purpose* to which goods should be put results in useless purchases, misdirection of wealth, and suspicion of the store on the part of the customer. The salesperson should realize that in an effort to meet competition articles are frequently manufactured which are of fair value for the price asked but are ill adapted for some kinds of service. Oftentimes goods that have to stand wear and tear are of this class although their appearance and finish may fail to reveal the low grade quality. It is a great temptation for salespeople in handling goods of this character to omit telling *all* the truth, especially when the customer is a doubt-

ful judge of the quality. When the truth about the goods does come out, however, as it usually does with use, the customer feels that the store is deceitful and perhaps withdraws her patronage. The old maxim, "Let the buyer beware," is becoming a thing of the past, and the sooner the better for all parties concerned with the selling transaction.

A common illustration of misrepresentation of purpose is that of selling silk shirts and other silk goods where the impression is given that the higher price is paid for greater durability, when in reality this material does not wear as well as cottons of cheaper price. These articles should be put on a "style" basis, i. e., explanation should be made that the attainment of distinction in dress costs money just as does the realization of durability. If such care is taken no misunderstandings of customers will occur. Each customer will be called upon to decide what function she desires the goods to fulfill, and then goods capable of meeting the exact needs can be sold.

Misrepresentation of purpose often results from *failing* to state conditions under which the article should be used. Thus, a customer came into a hardware store and said to the salesperson, "I want a can of green paint." The salesperson procured a can of green paint, wrapped it up and delivered it to the customer. It failed to give satisfaction and the store was forced to admit its negligence. The salesperson should have asked what the paint was for: window blinds, kitchen floor, porch chairs, or something else. It should have been realized that the store was not selling a can of paint alone, as was supposed, but also service. The realization by salespeople that *goods* cannot be separated from *service,* would mean a revolution in present day retailing. The store

and its sales force would be given a new standing in the community — a standing as high as the professions; more goods would be sold by a fewer number of salespeople; wages would be higher, with lower selling costs; hence, prices would fall enabling more universal consumption of the newer luxuries as well as the necessities of life; and finally, the lower prices of commodities of every-day consumption would mean greater general welfare and happiness — the goal of all far-sighted effort.

Misrepresentation of *operation* is illustrated by the following case. A woman was debating with herself in a department store whether or not to buy a washing machine. Her indecision was quickly transformed into decision to buy when the salesperson said, "It is so easy to work that a child can run it." Sometime later her husband remarked, "It takes a child the size of a man to move it." The injustice caused by the exaggerated statement of the salesperson was a fresh sore for a long time. It healed up only when the salesperson left the store where the machine was purchased.

Another case of an error of this nature transpired not long ago in a large department store. A customer was examining an aluminum coffee pot with a percolator consisting of a long cylindrical sieve resting loosely inside of another cylindrical sieve with a bottom. On being asked where the coffee should go, the salesperson remarked, "The coffee goes inside and the water is poured around it." The customer purchased the utensil and had great expectations of the coffee it would make, but actual use proved it to be disappointing. The coffee was impossible. The customer believed that she had been swindled and brought the utensil back to the store for an explanation.

It turned out that the salesperson made a costly error in describing the operation of the percolator, for the coffee should have been placed in the outside cylinder and the hot water in the inside one. The explanation was sufficient to induce the customer to keep the coffee pot but her confidence in the salesperson and the store was weakened.

Misstatement of *composition* is one of the most common forms of every-day dishonesty in sales talks. A salesperson was glibly describing a shoe in superlatives when he was asked whether the shoe was solid leather. Without hesitation he replied, "Yes." After a short period of wear the shoes exhibited fiber counters, paper insoles and the probabilities were that the boxing was composition as it rapidly lost its shape. The word of that salesperson will never be trusted again by this customer and although she would like to trade at this store because of its variety of stock, she hesitates to do so fearing that she will be waited on by this ignorantly deceitful salesperson.

Representing three-fourths wool as "all-wool," fiber silk as "silk," seconds in leather as "firsts," part linen as "linen," etc., are all cases of misrepresentation of composition that most of the mail order houses do not make. Because of their use of the mails such misrepresentation would constitute "fraud," yet the retailer often fails to say that goods are three-fourths wool, or that leather goods are seconds, thereby laying himself open to the charge of fraud even though the law does not endanger him. It would seem that if retailers are to compete successfully with mail order houses, they must adopt *at least* the same standards of square dealing as the latter use. Loss of retail trade in some quarters can beyond

doubt be partially attributed to the failure of retailers to recognize this important truth.

Misrepresentation of *durability* often takes the form of misleading, indefinite statements regarding the length of time that articles will last. This form of misrepresentation is illustrated by the novelty jewelry salesperson who, on being asked how long a cheap gold plated brooch would wear, exclaimed, "Oh, a *long* time." The emphasis placed on the word "long" gave an entirely wrong implication. Such methods might make a few sales but they are short-sighted to say the least.

Another salesperson, when asked if the finish on an aluminum tea pot would "last," replied reassuringly, "It will last forever if properly cared for." What "properly cared for" meant it is difficult to say, but any one who is acquainted with aluminum ware knows that if it is used constantly the polish is only momentary in life, but the metal although duller after use presents a clean, white, attractive appearance. A clear, comprehensive, intelligent answer describing the merits of the metal would have sold the tea pot permanently and left good will; as it was, the tea pot was disposed of to the customer but not "sold," for it must be remembered that an article is not sold in the most complete meaning of the term unless it brings daily satisfaction, i. e., meets the expectations of the customer, and the expectations of the customer are determined by impressions left by salespeople. In this case the customer had the impression that the luster would remain on the tea pot, and when it grew dull even with the best of care, this article that should have been a source of constant pleasure if rightly sold, became in reality a perpetual cause of annoyance and dismay. Dollars of good will had been destroyed by a

single unintelligent statement of the salesperson. Production of good will, not ill will, is the privilege and duty of every salesperson.

Oftentimes the word "guaranteed" is used in a loose meaningless way without indicating for what period or under what conditions. Again, the phrase, "it will last a life-time" is open to question. Does it mean the Biblical three score years and ten or the balance of the purchaser's life, or what? Still further, the phrase, "it will last as long as you will want it" often gives an impression of durability that is not justified. If a definite term of life is attributed to an article by a salesperson she should indicate the readiness of the store to put the guarantee in writing, especially if the life of the article is a long one, since human memory is short and changes detrimental to the customer might occur.

Statements comparing the durability of two different articles, such as, "this piece of goods will wear longer than that," should be backed up with evidence which the customer can analyze and use for self-conviction; then if the goods prove to be disappointing the customer will feel that she purchased them with her eyes open — on her own judgment, and not on that of the salesperson. Especially in sales talks respecting articles the durability of which is the most important factor, great care should be taken to make the customer see the "reason why" for claims that are made. When style is the chief consideration, what has just been said does not usually hold true as individual caprice must be appealed to and satisfied.

*Exaggeration* is one of the many forms that misrepresentation takes. This may and often does concern each of the elements of commodities, such as durability, operation, composition, etc. It is common for ignorant peo-

ple, children and simple-minded folk to enlarge on what they actually see and exaggerate the facts in any situation. It seems to be a common occurrence for salespeople who know little about the goods they are selling, to artificially expand the minute information they do possess. This is true in all fields of activity; if we do not *know* why an article or phenomenon is good or bad, some superficial circumstance makes us decide either one way or the other and then we search our imaginations to find reasons to support our decision. In the case of salespeople, the superficial circumstance is the supposition that the goods are all right or they would not be in the store. That the goods may be all right under some conditions but unsatisfactory under others, or the fact that taking things for granted rather than ascertaining the "reason why" cannot develop an effective, to say nothing of a truthful selling talk, never seems to occur to many salespeople. The best remedy for exaggeration is knowledge based on careful analysis. Goods will then appear in their true light and not with distorted functions and false characteristics.

The discussion on honesty may well be concluded by representing a certain procedure that is dishonest although not always recognized as such by salespeople. This is the practice called "loading." Especially in the past was a salesperson considered clever if she could dispose of a large order of goods that were not wanted. Fortunately such ideas are becoming passé. Salespeople are becoming impressed with the fact that it is poor business to give the customer any cause for future regret. It is more and more being realized that a customer is not profitably sold if only sold *once*. The cost of getting a new customer into the store is great and can only be min-

imized by dividing it over many sales to this customer. Furthermore, the significance attached to the term sale has undergone a radical change. Disposing of goods is not necessarily selling goods. Goods are not successfully sold unless they *stay sold,* i. e., unless they continually give off satisfactions and during their entire lives give no reason for disappointment.

This does not mean that the customer should not often be strongly urged to buy. The point is that the *interest* of the customer should be held paramount, and if this is faithfully done the interest of the store and its prosperity will take care of itself. The salesperson must see that the interest of all parties to the selling transaction are mutual and cannot be disregarded to the benefit of any one party to the sale.

The difference between loading and not loading is illustrated by the following case. A certain customer entered a drug store to look at toothbrushes. After having decided to purchase one, the salesperson said, "Won't you take two of them?" "I guess one will be enough," replied the customer, feeling that the salesperson was trying to sell all he could. A short time afterwards the same customer was in another drug store in the same town looking at toothbrushes. "I surmise that you travel a good deal," inquired the salesperson, after the customer had indicated his desire to purchase a toothbrush. "Yes," said the customer. "Well," continued the salesperson, "you know how it goes. A fellow puts the toothbrush on the shelf in the hotel bath-room and goes away and forgets it. Then when it is wanted, it is not to be had. Possibly several hours may elapse before the opportunity arises to get another one. Such inconvenience can be avoided by carrying an extra one in your

case. You will always have one then." The customer purchased two toothbrushes and later on told a friend that he would have purchased six if the salesperson could have told him *why* he should purchase them. Here is a case where the salesperson worked out a logical *reason* why it was to the interest of the customer to buy more than one article.

Suggesting that customers buy more goods than was their intention is not loading, if their viewpoint and satisfactions are always kept in mind. Unless this is done, suggestions to increase the number of articles sold amount to nothing more or less than begging. "Won't you take two," said a collar salesperson. Why should a customer purchase two? The implication was that the salesperson would like larger sales. A selfish viewpoint alone was prominent. Such a viewpoint defeats its own purpose. Unless salespeople can think of reasons why it is to the customer's interest to buy more goods, they should sell only what is asked for. Increasing sales by suggestion is only limited by the scope of the salesperson's ingenuity in finding reasons why it is to the interest of the customer to buy.

All lines of goods have great possibilities in this direction. A certain collar salesperson is selling collars by the *box*, and he says that it is easier to sell boxes of collars than it is to sell one or two collars. He has thought out three reasons why it is to the advantage of every man to buy collars by the box. This salesperson gets a high salary but the store manager says that he is cheaper than other salespeople receiving less. Some shoe salespeople sell two pairs of shoes where others sell only one. They have discovered why it is to the *advantage* of the customer to purchase two pairs of shoes instead of

one. They are looking out for the interests of the customer and in such cases the salespeople's interests take care of themselves. Service to the customer is the only honest objective which justifies suggesting more goods than customers ask for.

## TACT

"Tact," some one has said, "is to say the right thing at the right time." However, tact might be considered the saying and doing of the right thing at any time. It is the lubricant that keeps the selling wheels running smoothly. Tact guides salespeople around dangerous pitfalls and leads them triumphantly through critical situations. Its presence is not always perceived by customers but its absence is readily recognized.

Tact is nothing more nor less than "mental alertness," the ability to see a situation and adapt one's self to it. When customers are analyzed and the selling talk made to appeal to the most predominant buying motives, then tact has been used in adapting the selling talk to circumstances. When sales methods are varied to meet the varied whims and temperaments of different people, tact has been displayed. Tact can only thrive in conjunction with other virtues such as cheerfulness, courtesy, patience, promptness, keen perception and the ability to decide quickly on the most expedient course to pursue. In fact, these attributes of personality are *part of* tact, the latter being non-existent without them. To have one's being in sympathetic vibration with one's fellow-beings, to see with their eyes, to hear with their ears, to think with their minds, to feel their feelings, is to be understandingly atune with customers. If *their* point of view is considered in all cases, there can be no contro-

versies and antagonisms which are disagreeable to all concerned, and unfortunately are only too common in present day retailing.

Failure to use tact is usually due to lack of imagination. Tactless persons do not adequately visualize the complex results that arise from their unconsidered acts. They do not seem to be able to get out of themselves. They are, in fact, selfish, critical or contemptuous in attitude, any one of which qualities destroys the sympathy of understanding.

A man entered a men's ready-to-wear store and asked to look at suits. One suit in particular seemed to interest him. "That's certainly a fine cheviot," he remarked, stroking the sleeve of the coat. "That's not cheviot," said the salesperson, going on to explain what it was; but he was talking to deaf ears. The customer's interest in the goods was effectually killed by the tactlessness exhibited by the salesperson. In reality, the customer was wrong in his assertion — the cloth was not a cheviot, but apparently the salesperson could only rectify the error by antagonizing the customer. A tactful salesperson would probably have said, "That's an excellent material and does look like a cheviot, in fact most people would take it for a cheviot. However, it is a . . . etc." Such a method of giving information "lets the customer down easy" and increases rather than decreases interest in the goods. The correction of mistakes can be forced unneutralized down customers' throats to their dissatisfaction and loss of interest, or it can be sugar-coated by tact and utilized as a factor in consummating a sale. The tactful salesperson never contradicts.

A tactful salesperson is careful to avoid all argument. Argument stimulates the customer to think of and formu-

late objections to buying. It is antagonistic to suggestion. It places the salesperson on the defensive; makes her follow instead of lead. If continued for any length of time it may lead to alienation of the customer. A tactful salesperson does not handicap herself by encouraging or being a party to an argument. She knows when to concede to statements made by customers and *when* to object; but the important thing to be remembered is, she knows *how* to object.

Some personalities appear to be fundamentally and irreconcilably opposed to each other. The buyer and seller, the cogs in the selling machine, do not mesh, and friction occurs when the wheels of the selling machine commence to grind out sales. When such is the case, a tactful salesperson will relegate her own personality into the background as soon as possible, by interesting the customer in the goods and by avoiding any reference to herself. A tactless salesperson, who does not sense the reason for the cold attitude of the customer, would probably commit the fatal blunder of attempting to warm her up and make her more genial.

An instance of clashing personalities was experienced by the writer in a men's furnishings store. The salesperson " grated on " the customer from the first, making the latter sullen and unresponsive. The salesperson, misunderstanding the cause of the customer's attitude, attempted to jolly him into a better mood. Open offense was not taken at even such untactful methods; but when finally the salesperson took an attractive cravat and held it up against his own shirt front, commenting on its appropriateness to the customer, the latter became incensed at the invidious comparison and left the store disgusted. The worst thing that salesperson could have done was

to have called attention to himself — and he did it. A tactful salesperson would have analyzed the situation and kept himself in the background, first of all getting the customer interested in the merchandise. In other stores, the placing of a cravat against a salesperson's shirt front has made a "hit" with the same customer because the former's personality has appeared attractive to the latter. A tactful salesperson *knows* when his personality is admired and when its influence is negative.

The existence of a mood cannot successfully be challenged by a salesperson; its cause should be ascertained. If the reason for its existence is not known there is danger that the mood will be ignored as visionary or else some haphazard method improvised to deal with it. Tact recognizes conditions as they *actually* exist (not as they appear to be) and handles them intelligently.

"Never give up" is a good slogan for the salesperson to follow but if vigorously adhered to under all circumstances may prove to be a stumbling block. The slogan should be, "Never give up while there is hope." The tactful salesperson knows *when* she can hope no longer for a sale, and graciously gives in. The tactless salesperson tries for the sale to the very last because she has not perceived the point beyond which any further selling endeavor is useless. Her persistence irritates the customer and leaves a bad impression.

Salespeople sometimes think that they are using tact when they are not. Flattery is not tact. To attempt to ingratiate one's self is not necessarily tact. Neither is tact always stating what is in one's mind even though the thought is believed to be true. On the other hand, it would not be tact to omit statement of any facts that are necessary to keep the goods sold, even though such facts

are difficult of formulation. Tact meets present difficulties and conquers them without endangering the good will of the customer.

In conclusion, a tactful salesperson diagnoses a situation and gets favorable results with the least amount of time and effort. She surveys a route of procedure that may be winding in its details but one which gets results. Conservation is her watchword. Conservation of the customer's patience, cheerfulness and good will; conservation of the store's prestige and reputation for service; conservation of her own energy, sympathy and spirit of helpfulness. Tactless selling is a great destroyer of these positive qualities that are of inestimable value. It is destructive, not constructive. It is negative, never positive. Like forest fires, the boll weevil and other loss producing agencies, tactlessness in selling should be carefully watched, closely guarded against, and if possible entirely eliminated.

# CHAPTER VII

## ELEMENTS OF PERSONALITY (*continued*)

### COURTESY

Courtesy is that attribute of personality that softens and makes flexible the other attributes. Without courtesy, natural aggressiveness (an excellent quality in selling) becomes obnoxious to some types of people, whereas if moderated by courtesy, it loses its harshness and becomes more effective. Courtesy is the polish that distinguishes the kind and considerate salesperson from the unsympathetic and thoughtless one. It is a luster that attracts people to its possessor; it is the brilliancy that only the finished diamond exhibits.

Some persons have been characterized by their friends as "diamonds-in-the-rough." Only the friends and relatives of these people can see their sterling qualities because these attributes are covered up so far as the casual observer is concerned by inconsiderate actions and unkind appearance. Some few intimate friends may "know" such discourteous persons and "overlook" the discrepancy between worth and appearance, but others less discerning will not be so painstaking. In other words, so far as the great mass of the people who meet discourteous persons are concerned, the good qualities of the latter are non-existent. A discourteous salesperson places her "light under a bushel."

Courtesy is, therefore, not only a sterling quality in and of itself, but also the means of *discovering* and *exhibiting* other success attributes, which, without its aid, would exist unknown excepting to intimate friends. Courtesy makes customers tolerant and willing to listen to what the salesperson has to say. It therefore not only brings out the salesperson's positive qualities but also tempers the natural critical tendencies of the customer and makes her open to suggestion. It places the customer in a favorable attitude to buy because it tends to disarm her antagonism, and enables the commendable and attractive qualities of the salesperson to be exhibited.

Attempts to render service, to explain the goods and make buying pleasurable, often go unrecognized by the customer because she has not been made to see these things through the avenue of courtesy. Because of the customer's apparent indifference to the salesperson's attempts to serve, the latter often becomes discouraged and comes to the conclusion that her efforts to please are unrequited and therefore might just as well be discontinued. Thus, lack of courtesy actually breeds discourtesy. The customer cannot buy goods from such a salesperson because she believes the latter has not understood her and does not try. There not only seems to be no way for the salesperson to transmit her ideas and her personality to the customer, but there likewise seems to be no avenue through which the customer can bring her own personality to bear on the salesperson. In short, discourtesy on the part of either party to the selling transaction, especially if perpetrated by the salesperson, acts as an insulator between buyer and seller preventing the contact of their finer sensibilities. Under these circumstances sales talks do not have an "appeal"; they are superficial for

the most part and never excite the deep and more permanent buying motives of customers.

Discourtesy closes the door to a sympathetic comprehension of our fellow-beings' thoughts and feelings. Customers are not understood and therefore cannot be intelligently dealt with. Courtesy is nothing more nor less than a medium of exchange. It is a means by which the finer feelings and thoughts of buyer and seller can be exchanged. It permits an ebb and flow of sentiments that are the very well-spring of the motives for buying. It releases all the pent desire and good will in the customer, makes buying a pleasure for her because of a feeling of mutual understanding, and enables her to readily discover the attractive features in the goods as well as the sturdy attributes of the salesperson. It permits intercourse between " inner selves " and therefore may be considered as a liberator of personalities.

Courtesy as a medium of exchange is current everywhere and always good for its face value. It cannot be counterfeited, disfigured, or " sweated," by evil-minded ones who do not possess its excellent qualities. It is the money of the realm for buying immunity from discourtesy, ill will and unpleasantness. It should be the coin that is " thrown in " every package to make the customer feel that she has been given something " extra." People like anything extra and will often come long distances if anything of such a character is offered. That the extra which acts as an inducement to come into the store could be something other than goods, has often been overlooked. Courtesy should be the extra and sold with the goods, for it must be remembered that in the last analysis people do not buy goods — but goods and service. The former is no more important than the latter, and if

anything, it is less important. Other things being equal of two stores excepting service and price, the store with the better service, even though it has the higher prices, will win out in the race for trade. Realization of this fact by salespeople will go far toward relegating the price factor into the background, and tend to lay the proper emphasis on the necessity of giving the customer the *kind* of service that she desires.

The best way to develop courtesy is to be courteous, polite, considerate, and sympathetic with others' views. An overbearing attitude toward others should never be permitted to exist even for a moment of time. What others believe and think should be studied carefully and weighed against one's own thoughts and beliefs before a judgment is formed regarding their respective merits. Tolerance is thus developed, and the habit of postponing judgment until all of the evidence is in, is encouraged. No more healthy habit could be formed by people in all walks of life.

To be distinctive, to give the public something " different," is the aim of progressive retail establishments. Customers are looking for the new, the unexpected, and store managers are merely trying to satisfy this demand. What can courtesy contribute to satisfy this growing demand for the novel? The answer is by giving the customer unexpected favors and displaying *unusual* politeness. It is not often fully realized the extent to which " new " and " different " service can go in satisfying the longing of the public for change, and the desire of the store management for distinction. Conducting a customer unacquainted with the store to the elevator, placing chairs for customers to be seated, opening of doors, saying " Thank you " and *meaning it,* showing deference

to all opinions expressed by the customer, getting the customer's point of view in all matters, and expressing opinions or stating facts in a gracious and pleasing manner, are all acts that should be cultivated. The dogmatic, overbearing salesperson is too common; the positive, aggressive, yet sympathetic and considerate salesperson is too seldom seen.

No doubt untempered aggressiveness has great effectiveness in some lines of industry but certainly not in the business of dealing with human nature. The fact that Americans, until comparatively recent years, were pioneers engaged in wresting the land from the age-long grip of nature, accounts in part for their rough aggressiveness and desire to get quick results. Then, men had to deal for the most part with material things and savages, neither of which demanded a display of courtesy; and by reason of the nature of such dealings the name pioneer became the synonym for uncouthness. Since all Americans were more or less pioneers, the discourtesy and boastfulness of Americans became proverbial in England and on the Continent. Gradually this conception of Americans is changing, but in some parts of the Middle West the old rough-and-ready method of dealing with customers in retail establishments still obtains, to the great loss of the communities. Mail order house courtesy, expressed in its correspondence and dealings, has been the "different" element in connection with commodities that many people in these communities have been longing for in vain and are now getting — from the outside. Unfortunate it is that courtesy is not indigenous to the soil of these communities, but far more is it to be deplored that the seeds of courtesy, considerateness and

kindness can only be transplanted to this soil from more fortunate localities with the utmost difficulty.

More important, perhaps, than how discourtesy originated is an understanding of why it persists. The failure to understand its importance, which has already been elaborated upon, is, no doubt, one of the chief reasons for its persistence. Another reason, almost equally important, is the belief prevalent among some people that honesty consists of " stating one's mind " at all times. Thus, if a friend is enthusiastically exhibiting a painting and is endeavoring to get the hearty corroboration of a person of this character, the latter, if she cannot appreciate the art, thinks that she is dishonest unless she boldly condemns and depreciates it. She does not try to see what her friend sees. She is not sympathetic, and in case her friend is of a sensitive structure such ruthless criticism goes counter to her nature. Honesty is not discourteousness, neither is courtesy dishonesty. In fact, discourtesy is very often dishonesty because it is not fair dealing.

Again, some salespeople " act as they feel " and think that they are sincere and honest. The trouble with them is that they " feel " wrong. They do not put themselves in the place of the customer and hence they act incorrectly from the standpoint of their own intentions. In other words, they are not sincere to themselves although they believe that they are acting in an honest way. So-called sincerity to one's feelings can never be justification for lack of politeness or absence of courtesy in dealing with others.

To continually get on the other side of the counter and see herself as customers see her, is the important

duty of the salesperson. To measure her courtesy from *their* standpoint, to learn to appreciate what customers appreciate, to ascertain their feelings and interests and magnify them rather than her own, are fundamental lessons in selling goods. Often, successful selling means self-abnegation which is distasteful to some types of salespeople, but it must be remembered that subjugating self is sometimes the only means of raising self to a higher level. Personality is an all-important element in selling, and any means available or method employable for developing it should not be depreciated.

The most insignificant actions of which people are capable may become the most prominent elements of their personality. Discourtesy may prove to be of small consequence in early life but its growth may be at a faster rate than the development of positive qualities, so that in later years the individual finds other characteristics dwarfed and rendered of secondary importance by the super-development of this negative attribute. To see the comparative growth and development of our personal attributes is to progress, and this can only be accomplished by getting out of ourselves, i. e., getting on the other side of the counter.

## PROMPTNESS

An authority on retail selling[1] estimates that the prompt salesperson gains from twenty-five to fifty per cent more business than her less vigilant companion. Whether or not this per cent is correct, it is certain that every store loses much trade each year because of the indifferent and dilatory attitude of some of its salespeople. To substantiate this assertion one need only visit half

[1] Corbin, W. A., "Principles of Salesmanship, Deportment and System," p. 79.

a dozen stores at random and observe the manner in which one's needs and those of others are served. Slowness in discovering and approaching customers, and an attitude of hesitation would characterize many of the salespeople. In fact, in some stores an utter indifference to the customer's needs and desires is the most impressive feature. The customer is made to feel like an intruder or a nuisance, often both.

Contrasted with this reception is the eager, courteous, cheerful attempts at trade-getting carried on by the mail order houses. The customer is made to feel that her trade is valuable; that it is wanted now; and also, that it is appreciated. If retail salespeople can learn to give more customers the prompt service they demand, further loss of trade will be prevented and much of the business already lost will be regained. But the customer's business must appear worth active, energetic effort; any other kind of endeavor is an insult to the customer's concept of values.

The causes for lethargy, sluggishness and indifference on the part of salespeople are many in number, but the ones considered below account for the majority of offenses of this character and are therefore worthy of careful consideration. The remedies for these evils are practical and so obvious as to be often overlooked; because after all, in retailing as elsewhere, the student is impressed with the old fact that what is closest to people is the most difficult to discern. Thus, instead of the obviousness of retail selling evils and their remedies being a deterrent to the restatement and reiteration of sound principles of improvement, it is, in fact, all the more reason why these principles should be given fresh consideration and examination from time to time and be more

fully emphasized. Practical experience proves beyond a doubt that constant study by salespeople of the causes and remedies of evils that become obscure through familiarity, produces greater selling efficiency. It is with this end in view that the succeeding subjects are included in the present discussion.

One of the chief reasons why customers are not given prompt attention is because salespeople *collect in groups* and carry on conversation. Whatever is the subject matter of the intercourse — gossip, business, religion or history — interest in what is being said by the members of the group produces abstraction, salespeople forget what is going on around them, and as a result customers are not served promptly and are often antagonistic in attitude when approached.

That the customer has just cause for being vexed under such circumstances cannot successfully be contradicted. Perhaps she is of an impatient disposition and cannot easily resist her rapidly swelling indignation at the insult; possibly she is more of a deliberative person, in which case she reasons that if the store is slow in providing her with prompt service it is probably slow in getting the latest goods on the shelves; in case the customer is vacillating in temperament, this indisposition to decision is aggravated by the negative indetermination of the salespeople — it will now be more difficult for her to decide. Whatever the type or social position of the customer, the impression given by salespeople that they are more interested in their own petty affairs than in the larger interests of the store, keeps people from buying from such a retail establishment. Customers feel that this kind of a store would not appreciate their patronage. A lack of confidence in the store's goods and methods finds root

and flourishes in the soil of salespeople's indifference to customers' desires.

Alertness of attitude on the part of salespeople impresses the customer with a sense of thoroughness and confidence. This positive and valuable impression should be in evidence as much as the goods themselves. Congregating in groups of two or more gives as bad an impression as having dust on the goods or being ignorant of their location. Readiness to serve at all times is some of the best interior advertising a store can have, and no matter how excellent its window display or its newspaper advertising these latter will be nullified if the customer's needs are not promptly served when she accepts the invitation of this exterior advertising and enters the store.

Some salespeople are at a loss to know what to do between sales, and because nothing offers itself they seek to justify themselves in conversing with their neighbor. Strange it is that they do not realize that such intervals are valuable and can most profitably be spent in a not too absorbing study of the goods. Leisure does not legitimately exist behind the counter until the salesperson knows *all about* the goods from the standpoints of location, quantity and quality. In other words, leisure moments behind the counter *never exist.* As already indicated elsewhere [1] goods offer infinite possibilities for study by reading, which should be done out of hours of work, and by first hand analysis of the goods themselves, which of necessity can take place in the store only during working hours.

If professional men followed the practices of salespeople the public would receive sorry service. If the doctor only worked when he sold his goods, i. e., performed the

[1] Chapter III.

operation or administered the medicine, if the clergyman only worked when he delivered his sermon, if the lawyer only worked when he defended his client, what degeneration in service would be evidenced in the professions. Long hours of study and investigation in office and laboratory are a prerequisite to the final selling of their services. Are the salesperson's services of less moment? Or, are her services of a high character *without* study?

On being asked why salespeople did not know as much about the goods they handled as doctors did about medicine, a salesperson replied, " Doctors know a lot because they are paid a lot." Here lies the fallacy that obtains in many a salesperson's reasoning and prevents her from becoming expert. Apparently, it is thought that society selects some people because of their good appearance, health, disposition or what-not, and says to them, " We have selected you as the beneficiary of our favor. Here is a large salary in return for which you are expected to have expert knowledge in the field of activity you choose for your own."

Fortunately for the well-being of all, such a conception is the exact opposite of the actual facts. Society, in reality, says to all mankind, " Become expert in any field of endeavor, be prepared to give expert service, and as a result your services will be greatly in demand, people will be willing to pay more for your work than for the effort of others less expert, and you will be happy because reward has repaid effort." If this true causation were fully realized by salespeople, as well as the universal necessity for study in all occupations before services are offered to the public, a new standard of expertness would appear in retail selling that would be revolutionary in its character.

Another reason for lack of promptness is preoccupation in *stockkeeping*. Stockkeeping, highly necessary and commendable in itself, sometimes so completely absorbs the attention and interest of salespeople that the latter not only overlook the fact that customers wish to be waited on, but sometimes actually view them in an impatient petulant manner as disturbers of their rightful labors.

In such cases, in the maze of her duties, the salesperson has become so intimate with her work that she has lost sight of the *raison d'être* of the store. She has made certain work the end instead of the means to the end. Satisfied customers should be the aim of every retail establishment. To secure this end satisfactory service must at all times be supplied. This cannot be done unless salespeople realize the end toward which their efforts are supposed to contribute. "The customer is the biggest thing in the store" is a good motto to have imbedded in the mind of each salesperson. Whether one activity is discontinued or another one commenced depends entirely on whether or not it conduces to keeping the mind of the customer in a happy condition. With the end of all selling effort clearly and continuously in mind, sluggishness in response, and antagonism toward disturbers of daily routine, cannot occur. Preparation to serve the public well should never stand in the way of securing that result.

A third cause for salespeople's slow approach to ascertain customers' needs, is *fear*. This may arise because of, (1) the natural timidness or indecision of the salesperson, (2) the memory of unfortunate experiences with customers in the past, or, (3) the unprepossessing appearance of the customer.

The first cause of fear can be eliminated by training. At the very beginning of her career the salesperson should realize that timidness has no place in selling. Salesmanship is leadership if it is anything — the leading of customers to satisfactions. Timid salespeople are never leaders. They lack self-confidence, vision, and are usually self-conscious. They are occupied with negative thoughts — how they may *offend* the customer, instead of being dominated by positive thoughts — how they may *serve* the customer. Subjective thinking must give way to objective thinking if the salesperson is to become efficient. In other words, she must fully realize that the customer has many wants; that probably some of them are at present unsatisfied; that unsatisfied wants give a feeling of displeasure while satisfied wants give a sense of happiness; that all people are seeking satisfactions and happiness; that the store is in existence to satisfy people seeking satisfactions; that the salesperson is only performing her legitimate function when she *aggressively* and *promptly* attempts to give customers satisfactions by ascertaining and supplying their needs. The fact should never be overlooked that the initiative and the right to exercise it rests with the salesperson. Indecision should never vitiate prompt action.

This does not mean that in every case the salesperson should advance toward the customer the moment the latter comes within range of approach. Some customers are timid and would be driven away by too bold an approach, but the point to be made is that the initiative should remain with the salesperson and be exercised when it will be the most effective. In most cases, promptness in meeting customers is desirable and is part of the service that is paid for.

In the second place, the remembrance of some customer who took offense at the salesperson's promptness in offering service, has oftentimes had too much weight in deciding the course of the salesperson's future action. The many cases of satisfaction exhibited by customers because of the salesperson's readiness to serve, apparently have had less weight and leave a less vivid impression on the salesperson's mind than the comparatively few instances where customers took offense at the initiative shown. That the minority experiences should receive more emphasis as a guide for action than the majority is a lamentable fact, but yet one that can fortunately be altered so as to develop a more logical procedure. Usually, to call attention to this error is to supply the remedy for it, while a careful study of the different types of customers [1] will tend to reduce to a minimum those cases where dissatisfaction arises because promptness rides roughshod over peculiar temperaments.

In the third place, uninviting and morose appearing customers should never be the reason for sluggishness of approach. People of this type necessarily must purchase goods, and they will naturally trade at those stores where exchanging their dollars for merchandise is the most pleasant operation. In selling, the attitude of mind (vision) of the salesperson is everything. If the latter can forget the objectionable characteristics of such persons and keep constantly in mind the fact that they are consumers looking for satisfactions, she will be able to make the right approach and leave a good impression.

Fear is an enemy to sales and in common sense has no foundation. The reasons for its existence are real in the

[1] See Chapter V.

minds of salespeople and may often be difficult to remove, but education and experience can eliminate them.

The fourth reason for lack of promptness in rendering service is a *misunderstanding* as to who desires and deserves service. Apparently the belief obtains among salespeople in some stores that the "looker" is not worthy of prompt service or else that she does not demand it. Whichever is the case, the results are the same: dissatisfied customers, wasted publicity, loss of profits and bonuses and the ingraining of a dangerous negative attitude in salespeople.

From one viewpoint all customers are lookers. Even though a customer knows exactly what she wants and asks for it, she is still a looker. She is glancing around trying to mentally masticate what she sees so as to be able to form wise judgments in future buying. In fact, she was no doubt a looker for the article directly asked for before she became a buyer of it. Looking precedes buying and yet is an intimate part of buying, just as continuous satisfaction is a part of selling although it follows the actual transfer of goods known as the "sale."

From another standpoint, however, nine-tenths of all customers are lookers. It may safely be said that not more than one out of ten customers has a definite idea of what she desires. The others may think that they have but when different styles, patterns, sizes and colors appear before them, they are educated to change their former plans and specifications. How true this is becomes apparent if customers will reflect on the basis for their own judgments. A true judgment can only be formed after the evidence is all in, and such a condition can exist not merely after the customer has "looked" at a multitudinous array of commodities in different stores, but only

after the *facts* regarding the goods have been presented by salespeople. Many superficial and trouble-causing judgments would be formed if customers had to "look" their way into conviction and ultimate decision.

Salespeople not only overlook lookers for the reasons already given but also because they do not realize their true significance in our industrial order. The customer and the position she holds is not appreciated. Salespeople fail to fully realize that all industry works for customers, i. e., lookers. All of our mines, smelters, forests, farms, mills, factories, quarries, and shops, work to produce goods for the person who comes into the store to look or buy; all the wagons, automobiles, steam and mule-pack trains, ships, caravans, and human shoulders, are enlisted for one purpose — to satisfy human wants by making accessible goods and services; every human being is endeavoring to supply something to the ultimate consumer — the person across the counter.

That the salesperson should be apparently oblivious to the tremendous strategic importance of the ultimate consumer can perhaps be accounted for by the benumbing influence of daily personal contact with the instigators and supporters of industry. The latter may often seem so numerous and so monotonously similar as to be of little importance. If the salesperson could view the customer in her true significance, the latter would be a much more respected person and would receive prompt service whether or not she proclaimed herself a looker.

Of what does promptness consist? How may lookers be promptly served without giving offense? The fact that such questions as these arise in the minds of salespeople at this time would indicate a close connection between the character of the approach and the nature of

the customer. It is true that this relationship exists but it is of little significance in this case because whether or not the customer is a looker cannot be determined in advance. In fact, she is not a looker until the salesperson has forced her to so brand herself by means of an untactful although it may be a prompt approach. In other words, lookers are not in existence until they are *made* by the salesperson. This might appear contradictory to the above statement that *all* customers are lookers. In reality, this contradiction is one in appearance only. The explanation of the paradox is that every one, from an outsider's view, is "looking" in order to form buying judgments which may develop into finality at the time of looking or at some later time. This acknowledgment of being a looker is not, however, uppermost in the consciousness of the customer and if not called forth remains in the background. Unless the salesperson, therefore, forces the customer to so define herself, the customer is neither a looker from her own standpoint or from that of the salesperson. She is a potential buyer waiting to be interested and not an individual appearing in the store to receive a condemnatory classification that prevents further intercourse with the sales force of a department and inhibits possibility of buying goods. So far as the looker in this sense (meaning something to be let alone) is concerned, she is made, not born.

How are lookers made? The answer is, by a method of approach or a salutation which leads customers to so characterize themselves, and having once declared their position they are loath to alter it. The methods salespeople use in manufacturing lookers are apparent to all after a moment's reflection. The most common method is by asking questions such as the following: "Is there

anything today," "Waited on?" "Do you wish anything?" "Can I show you something?" "Is there anything I can do for you?" "What can I do for you?" "Something?" Interrogations of this nature usually place the customer on the defensive, and as a protective measure she declares herself merely a looker. Past experience has demonstrated to her that in most cases such a declaration insures immunity from further attack by the salesperson.

Psychologically considered, the direct interrogation is a crude form of approach or introduction. Especially is this true if the customer is apparently interested in something on display. Her whole chain of thought is suddenly altered and the necessity of constructing an answer to the question is presented. Being alien to the interest she has exhibited in examining the articles on display, it impedes rather than facilitates a sale. If the question is stated in a pleasant and gracious manner, its harm may be greatly neutralized, but if the asking of the question has become mechanical as it usually does after much use, the customer senses its sterility and is as unfavorably impressed as if the salesperson had not made a prompt approach. In other words, promptness in approaching a customer, if coupled with certain methods of salutation, may be worse than waiting for the customer to approach. Promptness must be tempered with understanding.

Promptness in selling means promptness in rendering service, not promptness in asking questions of a useless and harmful character. Promptness should imply *readiness* to serve if needed, also, the ability to approach a customer with a friendly greeting without giving an impression of intrusion. Only too often a customer feels

that she is under obligation to buy if she examines goods under the supervision of salespeople, so she surreptitiously looks at goods when salespeople are not overdiligent in the endeavor to form unbiased buying judgments. In reality, the judgments are one-sided not having included the information possessed by salespeople. So far as the customer is concerned, however, the fear of an interrogation and the dread of feeling under obligation to buy greatly exceed the value of the salesperson's contribution to the buying judgment. The latter can be dispensed with if the former is removed. So thinks the customer.

If promptness of approach and salutation can avoid startling the customer and at the same time leave no impression that she is under obligation to buy, it combines the elements of effectiveness and desirability. This can be accomplished by avoiding all questions, and after a friendly salutation such as, "Good morning," by directly accelerating interest in the goods that have commanded the attention of the customer. Thus, if a customer is handling neckties, the implication is that he is interested in them. To ask if there is "anything today" is to repeat the most foolish and universal phrase heard in retailing, and, needless to say, the customer has formed the habit of answering this question in a certain stereotyped manner. Produce the universal question and you get the universal answer; it is merely cause and effect. On the other hand, suppose the salesperson says, "Aren't they distinctive?" and demonstrates one of the choice ties against his own shirt. What is the difference in the two cases? In the former, a mechanical question brought forth a mechanical answer; it served to destroy the customer's interest in the ties by introducing something alien

to them. In the latter case, the salesperson's statement fitted in with the customer's train of thought; what the customer was thinking was merely stated, enlarged upon and demonstrated. No friction was apparent, and if the salesperson gives pleasing information and educates the customer's sense of appreciation, ties will be sold without the necessity of "asking the customer to buy." People resent being "asked to buy"; they buy when there is sufficient reason.

This method is scientific because it enters the selling process at the psychological moment. It recognizes that the attention of the customer has been secured and that interest is aroused, and proceeds to arouse more interest, create desire and produce decision. It makes use of what has already been accomplished and *builds* on it. All the invitations to buy and the descriptions of goods in the advertisements have attracted the customer to the store and aroused some measure of interest in certain goods. To make use of this force is to supplement it; it is intelligent selling.

The method of interrogation fails to recognize the steps in the selling process. It shatters interest in the goods by altering the mode of thought of the customer, and is wasteful of effort in that it fails to take advantage of the ground already won. Instead of following the presumption that the customer intends to buy, it presents for consideration by the customer, the alternative of not buying. Its suggestion is negative and in the wrong direction. It should, therefore, be eliminated from all retail selling. When customers are looking at goods, to present the attractive features of these goods, promptly, energetically and pleasantly, is the best method of approach when done tactfully, i. e., when adapted in form

and character to different types of customers. A positive suggestion or two regarding the goods is all that is necessary for some types, but for others more comprehensive information must be given. With certain customers, the salesperson must give the impression that she is only passively interested in what they are looking at, but stands ready to answer questions or demonstrate; she must not give the impression of "prying in." In other cases, energetic attention to the customer's every whim and remark is essential to success.

In conclusion, it should be said that promptness means readiness to serve when tact shall dictate. It does not mean rushing up to customers to ask questions, neither does it imply great haste in showing goods. Surface activity is not necessarily promptness as here considered. Promptness is one of the resultants of right thinking and understanding. It is best seen where salespeople are on the alert at all times; where they have the correct mental attitude toward their work and know the reason for the customer in the store; and where they understand the selling process and fit their work into it rather than going counter to it. Promptness implies tact, enthusiasm, cheerfulness and the other positive elements of personality. Without them it is indeed handicapped.

### CHEERFULNESS

Cheerfulness is a most necessary element in the personality of the successful salesperson, although just what this term connotes few salespeople understand. Cheerfulness is the state of being gladdened or animated which shows itself in the face, the voice, and the actions; it suggests a strong and spontaneous but quiet flow of good spirits. It is prompted by dominantly agreeable emo-

tions and is conditioned upon mental and moral health and freedom from irksome cares.

Cheerfulness does not consist of wearing "the smile that won't come off." Cheerfulness cannot be worn like a garment. To be effective it must be a *part of* the body as much as the eyes, nose or ears. When merely "worn," affected cheerfulness appears in the form of a smirk instead of a smile on the face. It advertises the bluff being practiced by the wearer. Instead of radiating confidence, it arouses suspicion. Instead of being an asset, it is a liability.

Since cheerfulness must be natural, spontaneous, in order to be valuable as a confidence winner, the ubiquitous injunction, "Smile," found in offices and stores, or the same command displayed with other words of doubtful propriety, can accomplish little in the direction intended. Business, realizing the utilitarian value of a smile, has endeavored to find a quick standard method of manufacturing it in unlimited quantities and with interchangeable parts. Fortunately, for those who love naturalness of conduct, such placards have only performed the doubtful service of wall decoration. They cannot be effective because they are dealing with an effect instead of a cause. There are no short cuts to happiness or cheerfulness.

Cheerfulness is a matter of the inner being, of the heart. The external indication of what is going on inside is the smile or frown. The former appears, if the salesperson has developed a kindliness for humanity and an intense enthusiasm for the goods, if she has good health and is not harassed by worries and cares. The frown appears, as part of the bodily appearance, when selfishness rules; when ignorance of stock knowledge makes a salesperson loath to respond to the customer; when exercise

has been neglected, wrong foods eaten, or rest interrupted; when domestic troubles or financial anxieties are forever on the surface to chafe and aggravate the nervousness resulting from the day's work. The *conditions* must be right before cheerfulness can appear. The cause must exist before the effect.

Cheerfulness is emphasized in all selling because it has a great money value. Customers are attracted toward the cheerful pleasant salesperson. There is enough sorrow in this world without attempting to sell it; for, it must be remembered, a salesperson sells her personality as well as the goods. Gloom is a drug on the market because there is a lot of it; cheerfulness is high priced because it is scarce. Consequently, the store with much cheerfulness exhibited by its sales force is more valuable and attractive because it has an article that is too seldom found and is much in demand.

Cheerlessness is negative and repels customers. People who intended to buy, unconsciously turn away from a gloomy salesperson. This is true because cheerlessness implies indifference, abstraction and unwillingness to make buying pleasant. Customers like to shop where buying is pleasant, where they have confidence in the salespeople. Cheerlessness destroys both of these incentives. It is the force that neutralizes valuable advertising and good will. People have been invited into the store by publicity, expecting a warm welcome and a show of appreciation for their effort in responding to the invitation. They cannot consider a store entirely honest that contradicts its words by its actions, and the latter speak louder than the former in retailing.

Cheerfulness is a remarkable buffer against the friction and wear and tear of the day's work. It is the cushion

that eases up the jar and shock incident to contact with customers. Mistakes in representing goods or in handling different types of customers inevitably occur during the day's efforts, but the evil effect of these is reduced to a minimum by the factor of cheerfulness. Cheerfulness may "cover a multitude of sins,"— the customer will overlook a great many inefficiencies if the salesperson is cheerful. Conversely, no matter how much the salesperson knows about the merchandise or the customer, if cheerfulness is lacking, the efficient qualities lack in luster and may go for naught.

Cheerfulness should be ever present whether or not it is encouraged by circumstances. Sometimes a salesperson is rebuffed by the silence or apparent indifference of a customer. It is hard for cheerfulness to thrive in such soil but it is a plant of little stamina unless it does. Usually its persistence wins out and eventually commands the admiration and respect of the irate customer. Unwavering amiability in the presence of provocation often heaps the necessary coals of fire which burn a sale into the unreasonable customer. Under all circumstances, the best antidote for gloom and cheerlessness is wholehearted sweetness of temper and cheerfulness. This rule has no exception in selling.

A smile has a money value in selling it if it is attractive, but there are some kinds of smiles worn by salespeople that are a liability. One writer [1] has presented the following classification:

1. The pitying smile, when the customer signifies a desire to look at a cheaper article than the first shown her.

[1] Fisk, J. W., "Retail Selling," p. 203.

2. The sarcastic smile, when the customer intimates she is a more competent judge of her own needs than is the salesperson.
3. The knowing smile, when the customer says she is buying an inexpensive garment for the maid.
4. The idiotic, meaningless, vacant, perpetual smile of the salesperson who considers a smirk her stock in trade.
5. The bored smile, when the customer speaks proudly of the exceptional cleverness of her sister-in-law's second cousin's children.
6. The "Heaven-help-me" smile, exchanged with a fellow-salesperson when the customer finds difficulty in deciding between two silverware patterns.

All salespeople will recognize the importance of facial expression and the necessity of being cheerful and reflecting it in a genuine inviting smile. Artificiality is never attractive, especially not at close range. The kind of smile a salesperson is going to have twenty years from now is the smile being worn today. Is it attractive or repulsive? Is it an asset or a liability? Dress can be improved upon at some future time but not so with facial expression. The lines developed today will be the features tomorrow, permanent and unchanging.

If cheerfulness does not come to a salesperson naturally, it can be developed. The smile can be artificially developed but this need not necessarily result in an artificial smile, any more than artificially stimulating the growth of plants produces artificial flowers. If a melancholy or foreboding salesperson will repeat to herself on rising in the morning: "This is a wonderful world. It's

great just to be alive," or, " I feel fine, I feel happy," or, if she will sing or whistle, the feelings and countenance will respond appropriately. Continuously doing what happy people do, oftentimes sows the seeds of optimism and cheerfulness, just as artificial expansion and contraction of the lungs of a drowned person may be the means of their natural functioning. Cheerfulness, reflecting a wholesome attractive smile, should come naturally from a gladdened animated being in good spirits, but if it cannot come in this way it must come by whatever method it can. Artificially produced smiles are often just as good as the naturally grown, and sometimes they are better and more winning; but an artificial smile, naturally or artificially produced, is a great liability to the possessor and is repulsive to other people.

Cheerfulness in retailing is at present too conspicuous for its absence. This is no doubt partially due to lack of emphasis having been put on its importance, to store conditions which are not conducive to happiness (ignorance of salesmanship included) and to ignorance on the part of the salesperson as to the conditions under her own control conducive to cheerfulness. The future is large with opportunity for betterment as the value of genuine cheerfulness and the means of acquiring it become more generally known by store proprietors and salespeople. Part of the recreation hours now spent in idleness or cheap entertainment will be illumined with study and reflection, which will increase the salesperson's interest in her work and create cheerfulness. Keener competition, as well as exhortation of store managers, will be the leading causes for such a result. Greater efficiency in distribution (increased sales per

salesperson) must be developed if retail stores are to be justified in the future. If cheerfulness can help in bringing about this result, it will have economically justified the expense and effort consumed in its production.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE SELLING PROCESS

The selling process consists of four operations, viz., gaining attention, securing interest, creating desire and inducing decision. Unless the customer's mind is led through these four steps no sale can be made. When customers such as the impulsive type make up their minds on the spur of the moment, these four steps have been gone through just as truly as when the deliberative type consumes much time in deciding.

Does not every salesperson realize that sales cannot be made without performing these four operations? Everyday observation answers this question in the negative. How often has the reader had a salesperson bring out an article, give two or three facts about it including the price, and then "wait" for the customer to buy? In such cases, the salesperson does not comprehend the workings of the human mind. She does not understand the selling process; she does not realize the task cut out for her by natural conditions. The customer "waits" for the salesperson to sell and the salesperson "waits" for the customer to buy. In many such cases the writer has seen sales lost because the customer had no material with which to form a buying judgment. Her mind had not been logically directed toward a certain goal.

In order to understand *how* sales are made, i. e., what elements enter into their determination, the selling proc-

ess must be broken up into its constituent parts and each part carefully analyzed. In this way, the importance of each act, method and procedure of the salesperson may be determined, both in its relation to the other elements and the sale as a totality. From such an analysis it is to be hoped the salesperson will get a more comprehensive idea of the significance of influencing the minds of customers, and be able to make practical use of the material presented in previous chapters. Unless the salesperson can apply the knowledge regarding herself, the goods, and the customer, in the actual selling process, all this wisdom goes for naught. The one end of all knowledge in salesmanship is to *sell goods*. The analysis of the selling process will now be given.

## ATTRACTING ATTENTION

There are six general methods by which attention can be attracted, viz., promptness, attitude, facial expression, attentiveness, form of speech and tone of voice.

*Promptness* means constant alertness and watchfulness. The salesperson should immediately discontinue other work on seeing a customer and rapidly advance to meet her, either walking toward her behind the counter or out on the floor. The farther away from her original position the salesperson meets the customer, the more favorable attention does she attract. The customer feels that the salesperson is pleased to see her, and as a consequence her initial attitude toward the store is not one of antagonism. Many salespeople take a step or two toward in-coming customers but a more aggressive advance as here advised has greater attention-attracting value.[1]

*Attitude.* The salesperson should show *recognition*

[1] See page 146 ff.

by a nod of the head, and *expectancy* and *deference* by her general attitude. If she is pleased to see the customer her whole attitude will reflect this feeling and proclaim welcome. However, no matter what her words and face may say, if her attitude is overbearing and unconcerned the former favorable indicators are negatived.

The salesperson should also appear *energetic,* thus implying that it is a pleasure to serve the customer. Promptness is a kind of energeticness, but what is here meant is a show of strong vitality or animation *after* the customer has been met. Excellent health produces this quality more than anything else.

Finally, a *self-confident bearing* attracts attention to the possessor and creates confidence in the customer for the salesperson and the store. This attitude is extremely valuable and can only be procured by knowledge and experience. Knowledge of the goods, the customer, one's personality, the selling process, and the realization of having successfully applied the same, is the only soil in which self-confidence can grow and thrive.

*Facial expression.* The face should show *expectancy.* Such an expression can be produced by wondering in what way the customer can be served. Blended with this expression should be a smile. The latter results from being truly pleased with one's opportunity to serve. The smile must be natural,[1] as an artificial smile repels and destroys confidence. A natural winning smile is one of the best attractors of attention. Customers attend to it because it creates a pleasant sensation in them.

*Attentiveness.* Can the salesperson perform some *unexpected service* for the customer? If so, the latter's attention is irresistibly directed toward the person per-

[1] See page 160 ff.

forming the unusual act. The out-of-the-ordinary never fails to get people's attention.

Another form of attentiveness is to *catch the customer's first words.* No worse initial impression could be left with the customer than to ask her to repeat what she has said. The salesperson may sometimes find it necessary to ask the customer to restate what she has said when the latter has garbled her words, but very often salespeople ask for the repetition of the customer's first words simply because they have not been paying strict attention. If the salesperson looks the customer in the face there is little necessity for requesting her to repeat her statements. Careful attention must be given to every move the customer makes, else some meaningful expressions will be overlooked, thereby indicating a lack of interest on the part of the salesperson.

*Form of Speech.* The salesperson's speech attracts favorable attention when it is *courteous.* So much of every-day speech lacks this refined element that when it does exist it attracts attention. Secondly, it should be *suited to the customer.* It must be simple and direct with some people, more dignified and less persistent with others.

Thirdly, instead of asking the customer whether she wants " something," the salesperson should greet her with a " Good morning." If this is said with the expectation that the customer will speak and state her desires, such will be the case. However, it can be said in such a way as to discourage expression. The important point to be noted is that the salesperson should, by her speech, *offer service immediately* without using cut and dried salutations which have long since become devitalized by constant

use.[1] Each store or department should have its distinctive salutation which could be discarded and replaced by a new one whenever its virility and effectiveness were lost. In some cases, a question is satisfactory if it does not place customers under an obligation to buy. Examples of such salutations are: "Do you desire service?" "Do you wish attention?" etc. Usually, however, questions of any kind are a bad means of greeting people because energy is required to answer them. When customers are permitted to tell their needs of their own accord, a much more favorable impression of the store is left with them.

Fourthly, the *customer's name* should be used in the salutation. Few salespeople recognize the importance of this principle. Attention is often easily secured by detaching a customer from her surroundings through the mentioning of her name. Where a minute before she was just a customer, now, after mentioning her name, she becomes an individual. The attention-getting value of this individualizing device cannot be too greatly emphasized in the first step of the selling process.

*Tone of voice.* In the first place, the tone of voice should be *clear* and *distinct.* There should be no question on the part of the customer as to what the salesperson is saying. Attention can be secured through the tone of the voice only when the latter carries to the customer an unmistakable meaning.

In the second place, the tone of voice should be *sincere.* If the salesperson believes what she says and is conscientiously looking out for the welfare of the customer, her voice will reflect the sincerity in her heart and

[1] See pages 156–7.

impress the customer favorably. If the customer's confidence can thus be secured at the start, not only is attention secured but also good will. Sincere thinking and acting are prerequisites for a sincere tone of voice.

In the third place, the tone of voice should be *rhythmical.* A high-pitched voice irritates, a low unintelligent mumble exasperates, while a rhythmical measured tone soothes the customer. The latter variety is attractive, inviting and actually impels attention, while the others repel and antagonize. Whether or not a customer stops at the counter long enough to inspect the goods, often depends to a large extent on the cadence of the salesperson's tone of voice when speaking the words of introduction. A well-modulated voice should be a part of every salesperson's equipment. If it is not a natural acquirement then special training should produce it.

In the fourth place, the tone of voice should be *suited to the customer.* If the customer is an impulsive type the tone of voice will be louder and more aggressive than when speaking to the confident customer.[1] With the suspicious type the tone of voice must be warm with enthusiasm, but with the friendly customer it must be cooler, lighter and carrying less assurance. With the deliberative customer the tone must indicate carefulness and willingness to go into detail without hurrying; the obstinate man must be impressed with the flexibility of tone. Whatever type of customer the salesperson meets, the tone in which the first few words are said secures attention or loses it just in proportion to its suitability. Much study can profitably be spent in analyzing the different tones in one's voice and in ascertaining in what circumstances each is the most effective.

[1] See pages 92 ff. and 103 ff.

## AROUSING INTEREST

Interest can be aroused by the first words regarding the goods and the initial actions in showing them.

*First words regarding the goods.* First, some *definite information* should be given. The customer must have something around which she can build her thought. Instead of glittering generalities that make no impression, definite facts about the goods should be stated.[1] Thorough knowledge of the merchandise will enable the salesperson to make this valuable first impression. Hackneyed phrases are valueless.

Second, the *most vital selling point* should be presented. Early in the selling process this point is of greatest value although later on it should be repeated. The vital importance of an article is a " reason " for buying which should not be overlooked by the salesperson. It is the element that gives perspective to the sales talk. By the very " bigness " of an idea, interest is often aroused and opposition forced into the background. The most vital selling point of any article for all conditions may not be determinable, but may vary with customers. However, whatever the salesperson decides upon as most important, that should be given.

Third, a *positive statement* arouses interest. Let the salesperson affirm in a positive manner some function that the merchandise is supposed to perform, and the customer will tend to ignore the less positive impressions around her and become concerned about what the salesperson is saying. Having confidence in what one is saying is here an important factor, because without it a deep enough impression cannot be made on the customer's

[1] See pages 35–42.

mind to arouse strong interest and sustain it until desire develops. Self-conviction must occur before customer-conviction can exist.

Fourth, the *purpose of the purchase should be referred to.* Just what the merchandise is supposed to do or accomplish should be clearly understood by customer and salesperson. Any chance of future misunderstanding is thereby removed, and both parties to the selling transaction feel that they are dealing with the same thing. When customers feel that their interests are being looked after, interest is more readily aroused.

*First actions in showing goods.* First, there should be *promptness* in showing goods. Interest can be aroused by an immediate display of appropriate merchandise or it can be effectively killed by hesitation in finding and showing goods. Especially is this true with the impulsive customer who becomes irritated over delays. Asking other salespeople where goods are to be found or being unable to locate them *immediately* are two good methods of deadening the customer's interest in the goods. Lack of promptness in showing merchandise implies *indifference* on the part of the salesperson, and indifference never yet succeeded in arousing a customer's interest. The goods should be displayed before the customer as soon as she is ready to look at them.

Second, the salesperson should always *bring the goods to the customer.* It ought not to be necessary for the customer to follow the salesperson around in order to purchase goods. If the customer is comfortably seated and the goods brought to her, there will be less friction because of tired nerves. Interest is a plant that grows out of the soil of satisfaction. Bringing goods to the customer creates in her a sense of satisfaction because it

appeals to her vanity and laziness.[1] The expenditure of the customer's energy discourages the expenditure of her money. An effort on the part of the salesperson to conserve the customer's energy always brings appreciation from the latter and arouses her interest in the goods.

Third, the *goods should be placed in reach* of the customer. This permits the functioning of the senses of touch, smell or taste,[2] thereby vivifying the initial impressions of the merchandise on the customer's brain. Moreover, goods just out of reach often exasperates the customer although she may say nothing, and thus opposing ideas may enter her mind to inhibit arousal of interest. Sometimes customers cannot resist from reaching for goods out of their immediate reach. This action indicates that *for a time* their interest or ardor was dampened and could not be revived without momentary possession of the goods. The universal characteristic of laziness was overcome because the instinct of possession was stronger. In some cases, however, the reverse of this may be true, and the customer's sense of touch or her instinct of possession may never be appealed to if the goods are not displayed so that she can handle them without effort. Indeed, if she can be *induced* to handle them, interest will be aroused more quickly than otherwise would have been the case.[3]

Fourth, the *goods should be displayed to the best advantage.* For example, pile fabrics appear more attractive when the light strikes them a certain way, while some articles seem to take on a more desirable color when exposed in natural light. If possible, the article should be put to the *use* for which it is intended. Thus, ready-to-wear arouses interest to the fullest extent only

[1] See page 88 ff. [2] See pages 46–7. [3] See page 74 ff.

when it is placed on the customer. Shoes must be worn; draperies should be exhibited in the manner they will appear in use; neckties are effective when held against a shirt as a background; socks appear to best advantage when shown on a model; furniture exhibited in a sympathetic environment arouses interest. Merchandise, to appear to the best advantage, must be displayed from the standpoint of *color* and *form* as it will look in actual use. The customer is usually interested to know "how it will look," and this reflection of the instinct of curiosity [1] is satisfied through appropriate display.

Fifth, *objectionable features should be removed.* This applies to the immediate surroundings or to the goods themselves. If neighboring goods tend to distract the customer's attention or neutralize the salesperson's efforts in any way, these must be removed. Sometimes a customer does not get interested in draperies, ready-to-wear and other merchandise because their colors clash with those of near-by goods. The difficulty is supposed to reside in the contemplated purchases when in reality it lies in the inharmonious surroundings.

Moreover, if the goods themselves have temporary features which depreciate them in the eyes of customers, these must be physically eliminated or talked out of existence. An example of using physical elimination was recently seen by the writer, when a shoe salesperson fitted a "boxless" shoe to a customer's foot. Because of the lack of stiffening over the toes the leather wrinkled. For this reason the customer lost interest in the shoe until the salesperson filled the point of the toe with curled hair, preventing further wrinkling. The customer showed renewed interest in this particular type of shoe because of

[1] See page 80 ff.

the quick elimination of the objectionable feature. Objectionable features are talked out of existence when a salesperson tells a customer who has tried on a suit, that, "The wrinkles will all be pressed out, of course," or that, "The coat will look altogether different when it is 'fitted.'" Whatever and wherever the objectionable features may be, the salesperson should promptly locate and eliminate them. Interest can then be aroused and developed into desire without opposing influences.

Sixth, *the goods should be handled so as to enhance value.* Unrealized by some but nevertheless true, the value of any article is not fixed at any moment of time. The *price* of an article is fixed in a one-price store at any moment of time but its *value* fluctuates with different customers and different sales talks. It is within the power of every salesperson to increase or decrease the value of the merchandise. The writer has seen beautiful silk yard goods reduced fifteen per cent in value by careless handling, while in other cases the very same kind of goods have appeared more valuable because they were held up admiringly and handled in a deferential and respectful manner. A certain salesperson enhances the value of shoes by carefully wiping them with a flannel cloth before the customer tries them on. Likewise, the gentle way in which he removes them from the box gives them an added importance in the customer's eyes. The most expensive article in any store may be reduced in value and the meanest commodity may have its value increased, by methods of handling during a sales talk. *Salespeople are creators of value,* and just to the extent that they perform this function well can interest be sustained, desire created and decision induced.

Seventh, interest is augmented by *showing the right*

*goods.* A customer asked to look at silk dresses, size 36. The salesperson showed a few dresses among which was only one that appealed to the customer. A good deal of valuable time was consumed in considering the different features of this dress before the customer accidentally discovered that it was size 38. Immediately interest in silk dresses in that store was seriously dampened and could not be revived, although there were several right size dresses back in the stacks that might have proved desirable. Asking for a basket-ball and being shown a foot-ball is another example illustrating the point. Many more could be given. Enough has been said, however, if the salesperson realizes that the customer loses interest in the goods and confidence in the salesperson when the wrong goods are brought out for display.

### CREATING DESIRE

As in the case of arousing interest, desire can be created by two means, viz., words and actions.

*Words.* First, *the sales talk should adapt itself to the customer's suggestions.* If the customer desires any particular kind of merchandise the salesperson should bring herself into line with the customer's ideas, unless, of course, the customer's ideas are contrary to her own welfare. Even in this latter case, however, if the customer is *determined* to wear or use something contrary to what the salesperson thinks is best, the latter should concede the point, always realizing that the customer must be satisfied — not the store or its salespeople. It is difficult to draw the line where the salesperson as an expert adviser should end and the salesperson as a reflector of the customer's ideas should begin, but every salesperson knows that such a line exists. By the time the third

step in the selling process is reached, the salesperson should have discovered just what her function is in this respect, and proceed accordingly. One thing is certain, unless the salesperson consciously directs her course of action at this critical point, the sales talk will become either inflexible, rigid and uncompromising, or weak, uncertain and lacking in direction. Adapting the sales talk to the customer's suggestions is necessary, but it can be overdone thereby robbing the salesperson of the initiative.

Second, desire will be created *if new ideas are supplied as rapidly as they can be utilized by the customer.* If a pot of boiling water receives no additional water, it will burn dry; while if water is added at a faster rate than evaporation takes place, the pot will overflow. The same is true of customers who are at the boiling point of desire. New ideas must be added as fast as they can be assimilated, but no faster. If new ideas are not given to the customer as quickly as the old ones are absorbed, her mind will regain its freedom and go into realms of its own selection. In other words, the customer's thinking has ceased to be *directed,* and when this happens the salesperson has lost control of the situation. Whether or not the former tactical advantage can be regained depends on the ability of the salesperson to redirect the customer's thought along lines most advantageous for the creation of desire. On the other hand, if new ideas are introduced before the old ones have been assimilated, the customer has mental indigestion and rapidly loses interest in what the salesperson is saying. If the customer is observed closely at this point in the selling process, it will be quite evident when ideas have taken effect and when they have not.

Third, *questions should be answered readily.* If there

is any hesitancy in answering questions the customer's confidence is shaken, and it is difficult to regain it at this point in the sale. Friction or inability of any kind are especially conspicuous when the salesperson is gathering momentum for the closing. A complete knowledge of the goods is necessary to create desire. No matter what the customer wants to know, it should be given if asked for. Salespeople cannot afford to be found wanting in this respect for the simple reason that this knowledge is of incalculable value and can readily be acquired.[1]

Fourth, *objections should be anticipated.*[2] Objections are doubly effective when expressed during the last stage of the selling process even though they are adequately answered. When objections are met *before* they are expressed they lose their force and act in no way to lessen desire but rather to increase it. It is no doubt difficult to anticipate *all* objections during any one sale but there is no sale in which *some* objections cannot be forestalled. The strength of the sales talk is increased in proportion to the number of objections anticipated. In order to be sure of forestalling some objections the salesperson can make a study of the most commonly expressed objections and how they may best be answered. The results of this analysis may then be incorporated into the sales talk which will become capable of removing the hidden objections in a large percentage of cases.

Fifth, *the most vital selling points should be used.* One or two of these should have been used previously in arousing interest, but now these should be emphasized again and enlarged upon. Also, *new* vital selling points must be presented. Whatever may be said to make the customer want the article, should now be disclosed. Glit-

[1] See page 32 ff.

[2] See page 184 ff.

tering generalities have no place here. The big outstanding features of the merchandise should be made to dominate the customer's mind to the exclusion of every competing idea. These must then be related to the customer; they are of little use unless connected up with needs.

Sixth, *other purchasers' experience should be cited.* Have other people, including the salesperson, used the merchandise? What have they to say regarding its claims?[1] Sometimes it is not diplomacy for the salesperson to tell the customer that she has used certain goods herself and likes them, because some customers do not want to buy anything that a salesperson buys. Especially is this true of ready-to-wear. On the other hand, salespeople often feel that they have won the customer's confidence and respect and may strengthen their case by referring to themselves. Whether or not the salesperson's personal experience is referred to must depend upon the type of customer and related circumstances. Other customers' experiences may be advanced without the danger that attends the salesperson's own experience, but even here care must be taken in using people's names. If the people referred to are held in high esteem by the customer, well and good, but if such is not the case great harm may be done by quoting them. Citing other customers' experiences is valuable not only because it substantiates the claims of the salesperson but also because it appeals to the instinct of imitation.[2]

Seventh, *the evidence of manufacturers or other authorities should be used.*[3] Sometimes educators, scientists, manufacturers and others have evidence that is of

[1] See pages 44, 77. [2] See page 78. [3] See pages 43–4.

a convincing character. If this proof is brought to the attention of the customer, her desire for the article is created, because she feels that the merit of the merchandise is universally accepted and is greater than she had anticipated. The creation of this new element of value freshens the sales talk and helps to construct a conception of value that is commensurate with price.

Eighth, *getting the customer to agree* with the salesperson is an effective means of creating desire. If the customer agrees once it is easier for her to agree again. On the other hand, if the salesperson encourages argument the possibility of increasing opposition is augmented. Action tends to take place along the lines of agreement, so if enough agreement can be induced, opposition is eliminated and action appropriate to reason ensues. Asking a customer her opinion of the merchandise often brings words of praise which react on her making her enthusiastically desirous of the goods. A sale does not "grow" like Topsy; it is built up by conscious effort with positive elements such as agreement.

*Actions.* First, *the right quantities should be shown.* In selling ready-to-wear the tendency is to show too much. The customer is overcome by the extensive array and wide variety of merchandise and has difficulty in concentrating her attention on any one article. In the case of yard goods oftentimes not enough is shown. The customer feels that the salesperson is not willing to go to the trouble of bringing down and displaying a wide range of merchandise. There is a happy mean between these two extremes. Like ideas, no more merchandise should be exhibited than can be readily observed and assimilated. The customer must be able to note and remember the attractive features of each article, otherwise accurate com-

parisons are impossible. If too limited a stock is displayed the customer soon assimilates their qualities and becomes uneasy. Her interest does not develop into desire unless her appetite for seeing is satisfied. By careful observation of the customer, correct quantities of goods can be shown.

Second, *comparison with other goods.* This comparison should reveal the points of superiority. Without "knocking" lower priced goods, or goods of competitors,[1] the salesperson may show exactly wherein her goods contain more value for the price. Demonstration often reveals excellence better than words. Thus, if a customer reclines in a $60 davenport and then rests in a $100 one, the superiority of one over the other is actually experienced. A desire for the better article is created whether or not the customer can afford to pay the higher price. Again, if the customer can be made to realize that a certain mail order house rug, while it looks similar to one in the store, is cheaper because it has ten per cent of jute woven into it, the salesperson has given a *reason* for the higher price of her rug and demonstrated its superiority at the same time. Unfortunately, too often the salesperson does not know the true character of competitors' goods and therefore cannot speak with *authority.* It means nothing for the salesperson to say that she *thinks* her rug is better; she has to know and demonstrate her knowledge before opposition in the customer's mind is broken down and desire created.

Third, *the more of the senses that are appealed to, the more efficient is the sales talk in creating desire.*[2] The only means of approach to the brain is through the five senses. If the salesperson can work out sense appeals

[1] See page 188.

[2] See page 46 ff.

for everything she sells, the greater will be the possibility of getting people to desire goods. Much yet remains to be done in this field.

## CLOSING THE SALE

The final step in the selling process may be successfully accomplished by certain definite appeals by words and actions, yet, first of all, *the salesperson must be able to recognize the best time to close.* With the impulsive type the sale may not be closed in time; with the deliberative customer it may be closed too quickly. The problem of when to close arises with the other types as well. No one can tell the salesperson just *when* to close. She must be able to sense when the psychological moment has arrived. Study plus experience will develop this ability. If the previous three steps have been well performed, the last step should not be extremely difficult. Yet there are certain subtle factors which tend to obstruct decision, a consideration of which in the following paragraphs should aid the salesperson in successfully overcoming them.

*Closing by Words.* First, *handling objections.* No matter how effective the sales talk, or how much interest has been developed, if an objection presents itself in the customer's mind and is not dislodged, the salesperson is prevented from closing the sale. Such objections are known in psychology as inhibiting ideas. As long as these ideas or objections are prominent in the customer's mind, or are even lurking in the margin of her consciousness, she will not decide to buy. All obstructions to decision, expressed or unvoiced, must be eliminated before the fourth step in the selling process can be reached. The express train of selling effort cannot reach its desti-

nation — sales — unless it has a clear track on which to operate.

The salesperson should know quite thoroughly the obstructions that are most likely to be thrown into the path of her sales talk. Preparation to meet objections is the only successful way of handling them. Extemporaneous treatment is fraught with danger. Naturally, unexpected objections that under no circumstances could be foreseen and provided for, will come up from time to time during any day's work. Clever impromptu handling of such by able salespeople often occurs, but, unfortunately, this success sometimes obscures the necessity for careful study to meet most effectively the objections that usually occur.

Not only should the salesperson be prepared to meet expressed objections, but also unexpressed objections or inhibiting ideas. These inhibiting ideas can often be ascertained by noting the attitude of the customer when the price is mentioned or when quality or style is explained or emphasized. If the buying motive can thus be ascertained, the most logical inhibiting ideas detrimental to a sale may be disclosed and effectively eliminated according to prearranged plans. To ably meet an objection that is stated, is good salesmanship, but to anticipate and adroitly meet an unexpressed objection thereby forestalling it, is better salesmanship. Inhibiting ideas should be killed while they are still on the fringe of consciousness — before they come to hold the center of the stage.

Some of the most common objections, whether stated or unexpressed, are known to every experienced and able salesperson. One of these is *price*. How often has the objection, "the price is too high," ended all effort to consummate a sale. When customers say this do they

mean that the price is absolutely too high for them, i. e., that they actually cannot afford it, or do they mean that the store is asking too much for the goods, i. e., that a lower price would insure a fair profit? Or may it be possible that customers in some cases may mean neither of these possibilities? Sometimes people use the above phrase to cover up a general disinclination to buy. Because of the latter use, this phrase has developed into a commercial term, which, when expressed, usually indicates that the salesperson has failed to gain the interest of the customer. Redoubled effort to interest the customer is the best means of handling this objection under these circumstances.

Where price appears to be the real stumbling block to the sale, i. e., when the customer feels that she cannot afford it, the reason usually is because the salesperson has not demonstrated that the worth of the article (its ability to satisfy wants) is equal to the price or is fairly represented by it. In cases of this kind the trouble is with the customer's *estimate* of the article's value. Her conception of value is faulty because of her lack of appreciation, which in turn is due to the negligence or inability of the salesperson to supply it. The customer must be made to feel the sensations of a possessor; she should realize distinctly the satisfactions that would accrue to her in return for the price asked.

The *worth* of the article is what the customer could get out of it; the *value* is what the customer *thinks* she could get out of it. The worth must be equal to or greater than the customer's conception of its value if the sale is to be permanently satisfactory. Whether or not the customer buys depends on the salesperson's display of the article's virtues and their relationship to the needs

of the customer. Hugh Chalmers says, "If you need an article, you pay for it whether you buy it or not." To show the need is often the business of the salesperson. Needs do not always present themselves clearly to the customer. In order to be fully realized they have to be held before the attention. Worth becomes value when any article is fully appreciated. No commodity is highly valued or "is worth much" until its qualities and their relationship to the customer is known. Hence the necessity of "knowing."

Price is the money expression of the costs of production and distribution, including a legitimate profit in both. It should not be more than the worth of the article and is oftentimes less. If the customer's conception of the article's value is less than its price, not only should the worth of the article be further demonstrated, but also the *reason for the price,* i. e., the care taken in its manufacture, products used, processes gone through, and any other features that might interest the customer. Especially with high priced articles is it necessary to explain the manufacture and selling costs to a thrifty customer. To thus legitimatize the price is often the only way to close a sale, even when the *worth* of the article is fully realized by the customer. Unfortunately, ignorance of the factors that go to make up cost often stands in the way of meeting an objection against price itself.

A second objection often met is sometimes expressed by the phrases, "I want to look around before I decide," or, "I'll think it over and come in again." Unexpressed, it is indicated by uneasiness on the part of the customer when the salesperson attempts to close the sale. In the latter case the customer may not be able to adversely criticize the article in any way and may *desire* it. How-

ever, in the margin of her consciousness is the inhibiting idea that possibly a better bargain may be secured elsewhere, and that there will be regret later if action is premature or hasty.

When the salesperson realizes that the customer is desirous of shopping before coming to a decision, what should be her attitude toward the situation? Should she attack competitors or try to depreciate their lines? Although this is often done it is poor salesmanship. The result of such action is a feeling on the part of the customer that the salesperson fears the competitors and is afraid the sale will be lost if she has a chance to look around. This increases the customer's desire to do so. There is an old saying, "If your competitor talks about you, put him on your pay roll. It does not matter what he says so long as he talks." Talking about one's competitor or his goods suggests that these are important considerations — important because they have forced themselves to the front for consideration. But when competitors' goods have been brought into the foreground by the customer, their merit should be recognized; they cannot be ignored. Competitors and competing goods can best be placed in the background by describing thoroughly the merit of the goods the salesperson is trying to sell. One department manager, when asked how he handled "shoppers," said, "We endeavor to *sell* them. Women will always look around before they buy, so we realize that we cannot always get their order *at first*. But we try to find *something* in the line they are interested in that entirely suits them, and then we endeavor to interest them in this article and get them to desire it so much that anything else, no matter where it is found, will not appeal to them." To sell goods on their merits

rather than on the demerits of competitors' goods, is good salesmanship.

If the customer expresses her desire to look elsewhere, it is always wise for the salesperson to appear perfectly willing to have her do so. To attack the idea of looking elsewhere brings it from the margin into the focus of consciousness and makes it more effective in controlling action. Confidence should be expressed that no competitor can surpass the article in merit, but that the customer *cannot fully realize this until she has seen other articles.* Renewed energy should then be put forth in summing up the points of merit possessed by the article, and in bringing out new clinching arguments. Nothing will sell goods to a customer prone to look around, so much as a willingness exhibited by the salesperson for her to look elsewhere, and a large fund of convincing information about the goods. Customers, like children, have a tendency to do what they are not desired to do; so when the salesperson answers their declaration of looking around by commending it and advising its performance, forces are at once set at work in the customer's mind opposing its own suggestion and tending to eliminate its practical application. Expressed or implied unwillingness to have a customer look around before purchasing is justifiable under no conditions and is usually evidence of the inability of the salesperson to arouse the interest of the customer in the goods. This may be due to the defects of the goods themselves but more often it is due to the blunders of the salesperson. Restraint is not a proper nor is it an effective way of selling goods.

A third objection to closing a sale may be the presence in the customer's mind of inhibiting ideas in the form of rival desires competing to be satisfied. Thus, if a set

of encyclopedias is purchased, a trip to the Adirondacks must be foregone; or if a set of furs is bought, an old piece of furniture may escape the discard. Since most people have limited means, one purchase usually displaces another, although customers may infrequently view a purchase in terms of goods gone without. With high priced articles, however, if the satisfying ability of one is pitted against the satisfying ability of the other, a logical buying judgment is formed that will insure maximum satisfaction. The salesperson can better display the merits of her goods if she can obtain knowledge of competing desires that serve as inhibiting ideas. Oftentimes this information can be secured from something that the customer may say, or by questioning her. Knowledge of such objections places the salesperson in a position to advise the customer and perhaps remove her from an unsatisfactory dilemma.

A fourth objection sometimes expressed is, " My husband must see it." Where the customer is sincere nothing remains for the salesperson to do except wait for the husband to come. However, in many cases this objection is expressed merely to give some reason for not purchasing an article for which no desire has been created. It thus resembles the objection, " Price too high." The salesperson should realize that interest has not been thoroughly developed, and an attempt must be made to more intimately connect up the sales talk with the characteristics of the customer and her needs.

If the sale is lost, a searching analysis of the reasons therefor should be made. In going over the sales talk it will usually be found that important points were omitted or else thrown into the talk haphazardly. Perhaps the needs of the customer were not sufficiently considered or

ascertained. Possibly other reasons could be advanced for failure to close the sale. Not in all cases can the real reason for the loss of a sale be ascertained, but analysis is the only means of finding the reason in *any* case. If reasons for the loss of half the sales could be determined, corrective salesmanship would earn big results. That *some* causes for failure to close sales would be unearthed by study is beyond question, and this alone is sufficient justification for careful analysis of each sale.

A fifth objection is, " It's not the right kind," meaning perhaps, not the brand usually used. Thus, on being shown a certain brand of underwear, the customer asked, " Haven't you the *Blank* brand? " The salesperson sadly announced that she did not. The customer left, saying that only the *Blank* brand would suit her. In reality, the underwear offered by the salesperson was superior to that asked for, but the salesperson did not know it. Competing goods must be known as well as the goods on the shelves. Customers must be educated to see advantages in other goods, and the ability of these goods to better satisfy their needs. No customer will ever feel imposed upon by a salesperson if the latter conscientiously shows the relative superiority of goods. Service is desired and appreciated when offered.

The offering of objections should not be solicited or encouraged, as ideas contrary to closing the sale are thereby brought into the focus of consciousness. A new line of thought is started which will have a tendency to eliminate the interest already aroused. The salesperson should seek to make the customer forget all objections by intensely interesting her.

This does not mean that objections should not be anticipated and forestalled. Such a policy lessens the force

of the objection. What is meant is, that unless the salesperson is quite certain that a certain objection exists it is unwise to mention it. If it does not exist, the customer may think that the salesperson is setting up a man of straw in order to show her cleverness in knocking him down; or else, she may adopt the suggested objection and the interest that has already been gained will be endangered. Clever questioning will often indicate when a certain objection exists, without increasing its importance by encouraging the customer to voice it. When unspoken objections are met and answered, unconsciously the customer feels that she is understood — that she is in the hands of a capable salesperson who knows her needs. Needless to say, the ability to anticipate objections can only come through the study of experiences and customers. No one can be 100 per cent efficient in such delicate dealings with human nature but every salesperson can have the satisfaction of knowing that she is dealing more scientifically with the problems arising in her work.

Second, *other reasons for delay must be ascertained.* What is meant is illustrated by the following incident. A farmer and his wife were undecided whether to purchase a $125 or a $200 coat for the latter. Both of them showed a preference for the higher priced garment but something was delaying decision. The salesperson realized that if she did not close the sale soon the cheaper coat would be selected. The farmer was well-to-do and prosperous, so the salesperson could not believe that the desire to economize prompted delay. Finally, the salesperson surmised that a misconception of values prevented decision, so she said, " Why, the difference in price between these two coats only amounts to the price of one of the calves on your farm." Immediately the farmer's

mind went back to the farm where he saw many calves. He could hardly realize that he was letting one of these common insignificant creatures stand between his wife and the $200 coat. Quickly he said, "Guess we'll take the best one." In this case, even though the farmer was well-to-do, dollars were very significant and of great value to him because he had few of them. But calves were lightly esteemed because he saw them every day and had many of them. Translating dollars in terms of a calf removed the obstruction to decision. That such work is of a high mental character goes without saying. Quick thinking and analysis of reasons for delay closed the sale for the higher priced article. Other cases could be given to illustrate the point, but enough has been said if the salesperson realizes that delay in decision exists only because the *reasons for delay have not been discovered and eliminated.* A high quality of mental effort which results from training is needed in all phases of present day retailing.

Third, *referring to the customer's approval* of the merchandise tends to suggest a finality which is favorable for inducing decision. The customer wishes to be considered logical, but her position in this respect appears endangered if she does not confirm her former words of approbation. The act of confirming them strengthens the salesperson's position and weaves the threads of the sale more closely about the customer. Enough approval and the sale is inevitably made.

Fourth, *the advantage of immediate buying should be shown.* This is illustrated by the following incident. Some linen yard goods were on display for forty cents per yard, marked down from fifty. A customer was telling the salesperson that she was going to "wait" until

linens were cheaper, as forty cents was an " outrageous " price for such goods. The salesperson had no " comeback " to offer. One of the proprietors, overhearing the reason for not purchasing immediately, asked the customer when she believed orderly conditions would be restored in Russia. Russia was in such a turmoil at the time that the customer was forced to smile. She replied that she did not believe it would be for *some* time. Then the proprietor went on to show how that country was one of the great flax producers and unless trade opened up soon prices of linens would rise still higher. The reduced price of the linens on display was then referred to in such a way as to make the customer feel that she was being shown a favor to be offered such a reasonable price. This explanation, giving a reason for immediate purchase, sold several yards of linen. In many cases there are reasons why customers should not postpone buying, but they are seldom obvious to either the salesperson or the customer. They are known only as the result of looking for them, i. e., study with a definite end in view.

Fifth, the customer's consent can sometimes be obtained by *suggesting that the decision has been made.* When the customer is balancing between buying and not buying the slightest word may make or lose a sale. A ready-to-wear salesperson suggested that the customer had decided to purchase a certain suit, when she said, " You couldn't have decided on a more attractive suit." A furniture salesperson said in closing the sale, " Mrs. Jones, you have selected the best davenport we have in stock." A men's furnishings salesperson remarked, " Now, let me show you a necktie that you will enjoy wearing with that shirt." All of these quotations indicate a finality of decision which induces decision if the customer's mind is in

the balance. With vacillating customers certain devices for inducing decision must be used or else the salesperson must decide for them herself. Examples of some devices used to induce the vacillating customer to decide are found elsewhere.[1]

*Closing by actions.* First, by *eliminating other goods.* If other goods are lying around the article in which the customer's interest has been most pronounced, their elimination will tend to make the customer feel that she has decided to purchase what remains on display. Her whole attention is thereby concentrated on one piece of merchandise and is not scattered over several. It is too common a practice in retailing to allow piles of merchandise in which customers are not interested, but which distract their attention, to lie on the counter in close proximity to merchandise the salesperson is trying to sell. The very *act* of taking these extraneous goods away lends a feeling of conclusiveness to the selling process. Very often this simple act may induce the customer to decide to purchase the goods remaining.

Second, *by suggesting that decision is made.* Some salespeople induce decision by folding up the merchandise, setting it to one side, and reaching for the sales book. A ladies' ready-to-wear salesperson performed this operation by calling to the fitter to inspect a garment that the customer had tried on. Any change of actions may be used to suggest that decision has been made. If earnest, intense actions have been used in bringing the customer up to the close, the direct opposite kind of actions, if introduced at the right moment, may produce the situation desired. A change of methods implies a change in thinking; it indicates a turning point in the sell-

[1] Page 101.

ing process — the introduction of the new element of decision that brings the sale to a close. Practice and study will develop devices which will make it comparatively easy for the customer to decide. The salesperson should always be on the lookout for such aids to selling since the number of sales closed depends on the number of people persuaded to purchase.

### INTRODUCING OTHER GOODS

After the sale has been made, the salesperson is only 75 per cent efficient unless she introduces new goods in a positive manner and secures good will for the store. The latter step in the selling process has already been discussed.[1] The present discussion will give consideration to different methods of bringing other goods before the customer.

A common method used is negative suggestion, as, "Nothing else?" "That's all?" "You wouldn't care to look at anything else?" Such phrases should never be used because they suggest negative answers. Automatically, people say "No" when such questions are asked. In fact, the writer has sometimes intended purchasing socks or shirts, but after buying collars these other articles have been forgotten because of the fateful finality of some such negative suggestion. Questions of this character are not methods of introducing other goods although salespeople use them as such, but rather, methods of chloroforming customer's minds. They are devices to make people forget what they actually intended to buy. For these reasons they are worse than useless.

The real foolishness and weakness of such methods are clear when the principle underlying them is applied to

[1] Chapters VI and VII.

other fields. Thus, for instance, what would the girl think of the man who asked, "Mary, you wouldn't want to marry me, would you?" or, "You wouldn't want to go to the theater tonight, would you?" In the former case the girl would be getting out of it pretty easily and in the latter, the fellow. An agent came to the writer's home and said, "You wouldn't want your silverware plated, would you?" He was met with an emphatic "No," whereupon he replied, "I didn't think you did." After he had gone it dawned upon the prospect that he *did* need his silverware plated, and badly. But that did the agent little good. This salesperson had suggested a negative answer and had received it.

Another method of introducing other goods is by asking a question in a positive manner, as, "Something else?" "Would you care to look at shirts?" "Would you be interested in anything else?" Such phrases are an improvement over the preceding ones but they all give the customer an *opportunity* to say "No." They place the issue before the customer in such a bald manner that a decision must be reached, and reaching a decision is always irksome. In most cases it is easier to say "No" than it is to say "Yes." Moreover, the customer may feel that she will put herself under obligations to purchase if she answers in the affirmative. This, all customers hesitate to do. It is poor salesmanship to phrase questions so that the customer is given an *alternative of not buying,* or answering negatively.

As an example of this principle, one newsboy calls, "News, Sir?" "Herald, Sir?" or, "Buy a News?" "Won't you buy a Herald?" while another boy says, "News or Herald, Sir?" In the case of the former boy his questions offer the customer the alternative of not buy-

ing, but the other boy gives no such alternative. Whichever way the customer decides, a sale will be made. A men's ready-to-wear salesperson made use of questioning without offering the alternative of a negative reply, when he said, "Do you prefer light or heavy weight socks?" The answer of the customer led to a brief discussion on socks which developed into a sale.

The best method of introducing other goods is not to ask questions either in a positive or negative way, but to *show the goods*. Obviously, where the customer is in a hurry this cannot be done, but excepting this case most customers are willing to look at other goods if the salesperson brings them out in a tactful manner and does not give the impression that the customer will be under obligations for having looked at them. There can be no delay in hunting other goods or in placing them before the customer. After a sale has been made and before the goods have been wrapped, the salesperson can have at hand some new goods or goods that she thinks the customer will be interested in, and these can be presented by some such phrase, "I thought you might be pleased to see some of our recent designs," or, "Here are some shirts that harmonize with the ties you have just purchased."

It has been said that these suggestions should be made *before* the goods are wrapped. This is wisdom because there is a finality about wrapped goods which suggests that the purchase has been completed, while goods purchased and laid aside suggests that other goods can be placed with them. Some may think that this latter method is commonly followed, but the writer could give many instances where such has not been the case. In one instance, two packs of playing cards were purchased and

after they were wrapped up the salesperson suggested score cards. Now it happened that score cards were actually needed, but rather than go to the bother of having a new package wrapped or having the old one put into another package, the customer said "No." If the score cards had been produced and suggested *along with* the playing cards, they would have been purchased.

In a discussion of introducing other goods the question arises, what goods should be suggested. In the first place, closely related articles. Thus, if socks are asked for, garters should be shown. Shirts suggest collars, ties, cuff-links. Screws suggest a screw-driver. Shoes suggest laces, cleaner, arches, etc. Such suggestions as these are elementary and fundamental. They should always be made. In the second place, goods less intimately related with the purchase should be shown. In the third place, merchandise in other departments should be suggested. Very few stores have complete enough coöperation between the different departments in this respect.[1] The customer will appreciate any information that will enable her to find special values elsewhere in the store. But before such suggestions can be made, knowledge must be had of what other departments are offering. This information can only come from a careful reading of the daily advertisements of the store.

By suggesting other goods after *every* sale, any salesperson can increase her total sales twenty per cent. This is a conservative estimate based on the experience of salespeople who have adopted the methods here indicated. There should be no hesitancy on the part of the salesperson in performing this service because it is to the advantage of the customer as well as of the store. Sales-

[1] See pages 83–4.

people are doing the customer a service if they can ascertain her present needs and anticipate her future desires. It is chiefly from the standpoint of *service* — a desire to help and satisfy the customer — that other goods should be introduced at the close of a sale. If the customer's satisfaction is always kept in mind, larger sales will naturally follow. Negative suggestions can be condemned chiefly on the grounds that they perform no service for the customer and oftentimes make people forget merchandise they intended purchasing. As an obstruction to the satisfaction of customers they should be eliminated.

# CHAPTER IX

## APPEALING TO THE IMAGINATION

There are three kinds of salesmanship or advertising: (1) annunciative, (2) descriptive, and (3) imaginative. The first merely announces the existence of merchandise; it gives no definite selling points or reasons for buying. It may be illustrated by the case of a customer who came into a ladies' ready-to-wear section of a department store to look at suits. The salesperson led her to the suit section, and, waving her arm towards the racks, said: "Here are our suits," whereupon the salesperson proceeded to look out of the window. It is further illustrated by the advertisement which read: "We have a handsome line of messaline petticoats." Another advertisement of the same type commanded the customer: "Come in and see our complete line of thermos bottles." Such salesmanship and advertising take sledge hammer blows to produce a minimum effect because they fail to give the customer something to think about; they fail to persuade because they make no attempt to control the customer's mind. They are the crudest form of selling and account for large sums wasted in publicity and salesmanship.

The second kind of salesmanship and advertising is a great advance over the former type because it describes the merchandise. The characteristics of the merchandise are given, often in such a clear-cut manner that the

customer can realize its composition, construction, style or design. A portrayal of the distinguishing features of a commodity gives it a *personality,* thus saving it from confusion in the customer's mind with many similar but less distinguished goods. An illustration of this is seen in the method of advertising the Iver Johnson revolver. The characteristic of safety, forcibly impressed upon the customer by the distinctive phrase, "hammer the hammer," gives this article a personality of its own. Colgates tooth paste developed for itself a personality by describing to the reader how the paste comes out like a ribbon on the brush. Many other products have become clearly visualized in the customer's mind by the use of similar methods. Referring again to the messaline petticoats, this type of advertising would no doubt exploit this merchandise something like this: "These stylish messaline petticoats have deep flounces and elastic tops." As regards the thermos bottles, it would probably say: ". . . Drawn brass, nickle-plated case. Removable filler, screw-off top. . . ." [1] Here some distinguishing point has been created or exploited. Such sales methods clearly recognize it as their mission to create value in the customer's mind, realizing that value cannot exist alone in the merchandise. They are all right as far as they go but they do not go far enough. Only when they are linked up with the third type of selling do they begin to function at their highest efficiency in creating demand.

The third kind of salesmanship and advertising describes the merchandise, but it goes a step further—it appeals to the imagination. It creates in the mind of the customer pictures of the merchandise being used in

[1] Sears, Roebuck, & Co., Automobile supplies' Catalogue, 1920. p. 54.

situations for which it is adapted or intended. The merchandise is thus utilized by the sales methods as a means to an end—the functioning of the article—and is not considered as an end in and of itself as is often the case when the characteristics of the merchandise are merely described.

If this theory of selling is correct, a shoe salesperson is not selling shoes—he is selling stylish and comfortable feet. The shoes are merely a means to an end, and, while important, should not obscure the object of the customer's expenditure of money. If the customer remarks how tender his feet are and is apprehensive of their comfort in the shoe being considered, the salesperson may describe the shoe and indicate why they should be comfortable, but another salesperson will go still further and appeal to the customer's imagination of comfort, by running his hand slowly and tenderly around the customer's foot, and then performing a similar operation with his hand inside of the shoe. The implication is, of course, that the shoe is adapted to produce comfort to the customer's foot; and this implication has been produced entirely by an appeal to the imagination of the customer through certain actions performed by the salesperson. If the shoes will give the customer the comfort-satisfaction which he desires, such a sales method is entirely defensible. Where there is some doubt about the shoes producing this effect, such a sales method should not be used, or future dissatisfaction will result.

Most lumber dealers seem to be selling lumber, whereas lumber is only a means to an end. The end or object of the lumber is a house, barn or some other structure. The advertising and salesmanship employed

in selling lumber is therefore of an annunciative character, although some description of the lumber is sometimes to be found. The lumber salesperson should create in the mind of the customer a picture of the lumber functioning as the customer desires it to function. If such picture-creating power was more frequently used in selling this commodity there would be more beautiful homes and adequate barns on our farms than there are at present, and perhaps less of the customer's money expended on fake oil and mining propositions. The salespeople exploiting the latter commodities have been successful largely through their picture-creating power. The customer has imagined himself expending the income from his "investment," and he has become oblivious to all counteracting influences which might have saved him from loss. The salesperson with legitimate utilities which raise standards of living must adopt similar sales methods which produce results. Coal dealers, therefore, instead of selling coal, should sell heat (thermal heat units), while a customer does not want a mattress, but "restful, refreshing sleep."[1] Merchandise which will administer to the comfort and refinement of people can be sold by appeals to the imagination as well as commodities which bring no satisfaction.

Referring again to the possibilities in advertising or selling a messaline petticoat, a clever description combined with an appeal to the imagination might be stated something as follows: "Just what the particular dresser has been waiting for—a petticoat that fits so snugly that the gown or skirt lies perfectly smooth around the waist line. A handsome black messaline without belt or string of any kind, but with a six inch yoke of strong elastic that yields with every movement

[1] See page 41.

of the body, thus giving perfect comfort with exclusive style." [1] In this appeal the customer can not only see the petticoat; she can feel it in her imagination. Comfort and style are being sold, not merely a petticoat.

Perhaps it should be noted at this time that such a selling appeal as the above cannot be developed without getting the point of view of the customer. Naturally it would be quite impossible for a man to make such a selling appeal. Few men can make selling appeals for women's wear because they do not have a woman's viewpoint. The same is true of infants' apparel. As regards this latter merchandise a man would probably make an annunciative appeal as follows: "We have a handsome line of infants' apparel." A woman who understood mothers and infants would probably say: "We have here the daintiest, cutest mites of apparel—dear little duds that you unconsciously take up tenderly and caress soothingly, pat lovingly—just as if that tiny pink and white precious were already snuggling in the graceful folds." [2] Salespersons or copy writers must see the pictures themselves before they can make others see them. To see the picture they must be acquainted with the merchandise and its uses; a superficial knowledge of an article usually leads to annunciative advertising and selling.

A little further study of a thermos bottle will reveal potentialities which were overlooked in the annunciative and descriptive appeals. The salesperson handling this article must see something more than the vacuum device for keeping out heat or cold; she must see the thermos filled with cold lemonade, a dusty roadside, the autoists stopping to look into the hamper of food. The sales-

[1] S. Roland Hall, "Writing an Advertisement," p. 30.

[2] Ibid.

person must appreciate the satisfaction this article gives to the mother on cold winter nights when the milk is ready for the infant without arising and heating the bottle. The salesperson may have to understand the gratification accruing to the autoist on a cold night when his car is enabled to start readily because of the application of hot water from the thermos on the manifold. Every possible manner that merchandise can function must be taken into account and mental pictures of these functions created, if sales possibilities are to be utilized.

It may be thought that picture-creating power may be developed in the sale of ready-to-wear, furnishings and a few other lines, but that it is difficult to perform as regards groceries. It is believed that this feeling exists because of so few attempts to employ it in his field. On the contrary, groceries are pregnant with possibilities in this direction. Often, by means of a well designed word or two, a picture will be created in the customer's mind. For example consider "crisp celery." Doesn't this bring up a mental picture of brittle celery; celery breaking with the least pressure? Crisp celery is far removed from just "celery." The word "celery" may recall the boarding-house variety which bends double without even threatening to break. With many salespeople celery is celery; they neglect to make their merchandise distinctive; they fail to give their commodity a personality. Of course, if the celery is not "crisp," don't call it crisp; but if it has this quality it should be transmitted to customers' minds by means of a mental picture.

Some grocers are selling apples at so much per peck. A certain grocer, however, is selling "rosy, juicy apples" at so much per peck. If the apples are rosy and juicy,

a statement of these characteristics is not only descriptive in character; it also carries with it a desirable mental picture. Some merchants are selling "mince pies." A merchant who desires to give his merchandise a personality is selling " crinkly crusted mince pies." The latter brings to the imagination a far more pleasing picture than the former, viz., brittle, flaky crust that yields willingly before the attack of the fork, as opposed to crust which (depending upon the reader's previous experience) may yield only grudgingly before the combined efforts of knife and fork. Cranberry sauce is sold in many grocery stores, but the exceptional grocer made a strong selling appeal by prefixing the name of this commodity with the descriptive-imaginative word "tart." "Tart cranberry sauce" will start secretion of the saliva because it makes the customer imagine herself eating it, whereas mere cranberry sauce excites no such picture. The latter is ordinary, common, without interest incentive, while the former is forceful, compelling, because it appeals through the imagination to a vital instinct—the appetite.

Nuts have never come into as common use as they deserve. They are thought of in many cases as luxuries and holiday delicacies. Perhaps associating them with story-telling and jests around the table after the meal would create in the customer a desirable picture which would stimulate a greater and more continuous demand for this product. Nuts should be considered as a means to an end, and this end should be jollity, fun and good-fellowship, thus appealing to the instinct of companionship. Large possibilities lie in this direction.

In his department store educational work, the writer has found very little "creative salesmanship" in use.

Yet the isolated instances where it has been found have demonstrated its scope or application and its possibilities for increased sales. In a recent examination given to 376 department store salespeople only nine favorable answers were given to the question: "Using some piece of merchandise in your department as an example, make a brief sales talk which would appeal to the customer's imagination?" The six best sales talks given in answer to this question are given below:

"The customer is looking for a gift for a lady. A grape juice set is shown. The salesperson says, "Notice the vintage pattern. Doesn't it suggest the purple glow of the beverage? The set would show up to great advantage on a buffet. Your friend would get a great deal of pleasure from using it on the porch in summer."

"When selling a silk undersuit, picture to the customer the cool, comfortable feeling of the garment; also the smart fit of the outer garment."

"In selling piece goods, the imagination of the customer can be appealed to by so draping together with suggestions for making and trimming as to convey a literal idea of how the garment will appear when finished, and how she will appear in it."

"In selling a hall chime clock, the salesperson should call attention to the graceful lines expressed in the design, and the wonderful tone of the chimes. Also, picture the cultural value which grows with years of association; its charm as an inseparable part of the atmosphere of the home, to be handed down to generations which follow."

"This navy blue blouse would be especially beautiful over most any of the smart ribbon camisoles we are showing in our ribbon department."

"In selling a beautiful dinner cloth, the salesperson should picture the table all set with exquisite china, silver and cut glass, and, if springtime, she can add a large bowl of daffodils as a center piece to complete the effect."

In all of these sales talks the salesperson is creating mental pictures for the customer to retain and examine, and, most important of all, these mental images depict the merchandise functioning. Thus, the salesperson selling the grape juice set not only announces or describes the pattern on it—she goes a step further; she connects it up with what the grape juice set is designed to contain, viz., grape juice. In a twinkling of an eye, the grape juice set is functioning on a buffet; the customer can see it in its correct setting. In another moment, the customer's friend is enjoying its refreshing, cooling companionship on a porch in summer; the latter word suggesting warm, gentle zephyrs. The contrast produced in the last sentence of the sales talk creates a harmony of atmosphere which is attractive because of its subtlety.

In regard to dinner cloths, the writer has seen many a salesperson snatch up this piece of merchandise and point out one or two of its characteristics, but rarely has he seen a salesperson set it to functioning. The dinner cloth is not to be used alone; it can only give satisfaction when used in conjunction with the articles which are to appear on it. Hence, it is the salesperson's duty to place on it the objects which go with it. So we have exquisite china, silver and cut glass adding grace and charm to the dinner cloth. In fact, the latter takes on the qualities of the former because of the intimate association. Then come the daffodils which lend fragrance and life to the entire setting. Imaginary daffodils do

not cost the salesperson money; they merely cost a little mental effort on her part to construct; yet they are of prime value in giving the proper atmosphere for merchandise of this nature.

Appeals to the imagination may be used in other situations to produce customer-satisfaction. For example, two women get together to figure and plan out their dresses. In their imaginations they construct some color designs that attract their fancies. Then they go shopping to find in reality that which they have produced in fancy. In every store the salesperson exhibits all of the dress trimmings, but in each case she fails to discover the combination the customers ask for. As a consequence, the customers blame the store; and in the salesperson is planted the seeds of doubt as to whether the store is carrying the right kind of goods.

If handled scientifically, such a request should produce a sales appeal to the imagination by some such method as follows: the salesperson should inquire of the customers the nature of their ideas, and in case the goods called for were not in stock, only a small amount of stock should be shown at the start. With a vivid knowledge of what remains in stock, the salesperson should select in her mind some design or pattern that would be appropriate for the customer. This definite arrangement should then be described to the customers, perhaps in some such way as follows: "Now, if you could only get something with a gold band on a black background, it would be just what you need." In this manner the instinct of curiosity is appealed to, and a subtle desire is created for something which is not yet in evidence. When, later on, such an article is produced, the customer will recognize it as that which she favored, and the

chances are greatly in favor of her purchasing it. On the other hand, if this article had been brought out at the start, together with the others, it would have had no appeal to the customers.

Such sales methods, of course, take a high degree of expertness in knowing what is adapted for the customer and what will give satisfaction. They also require an intimate knowledge of how the merchandise functions or should function. The best advertisements of soups are those which exhibit this product functioning in a setting of good taste and elegance. Usually this is accomplished by picturing a well-appointed dinner table around which is seated a cheerful group of refined people. The picture, which aids the imagination in functioning, produces a favorable atmosphere for the product which is supposedly being served.

A certain grocery salesperson has attracted to his store the most aristocratic trade of a city of 50,000 population. He is not merely an order taker for groceries; he is a chef. He knows how to prepare rare dishes, as well as the common ones, and as a result of this intimate knowledge he is enabled to arouse the customer's imagination by picturing in an artistic and appetizing manner how they will appear on the customer's table. Keen rivalry between social leaders to outdo each other at their luncheons and dinners has led these women to the source of knowledge which will aid them in securing the distinctive touch to their menus that they so much desire. Needless to say, such demands upon the salesperson make it imperative that constant study be expended on this broad field in order to live up to the reputation which has been earned. Foreign foods must be purchased and experimented

with, as well as domestic ones, and dinners and luncheons must be attended in great numbers in order to get ideas which can be modified or adapted to different demands which are constantly being made. But such efforts have brought large returns and indicate the breadth of the field for the ambitious grocery salesperson.

The sales talk is doubly efficient when an imaginative sales appeal includes within itself an appeal to one or more of the instincts. In selling a baby carriage, an appeal is made to the parental instinct by picturing the baby in it. In selling groceries, appeal to the instinct of imitation by picturing a friend of the customer using them. In selling rugs, appeal to the instinct of possession by picturing the rugs in the customer's home and the enjoyment which she will derive from them. In selling a dinner set, appeal to the instinct of companionship by picturing the approbation of the customer's friends. In selling ready-to-wear, appeal to the instinct of vanity by picturing to the customer how she looks. In selling an automobile, appeal to the instinct of self-preservation by picturing the enhanced social esteem of the customer's friends. Every piece of merchandise has inherent in it an appeal to a buying motive or instinct through an appeal to the imagination. Picture-creating power is one of the most powerful devices in selling. [1]

[1] See Chapter IV.

# CHAPTER X

## SELLING BY SUGGESTION

The three types of selling discussed in the last chapter are embraced by two distinct fundamental methods of convincing the customer—argumentation and suggestion. Annunciative and imaginative sales methods comprise suggestive selling, while descriptive sales methods are an important phase of logic and argumentative selling. These two fundamental methods of persuasion are distinct because argumentation appeals to the intellect, while suggestion and word pictures appeal to the emotions.

It has been indicated that the most advanced and powerful type of sales methods are a combination of description and imagination, i. e., argumentation and suggestion, with the major emphasis on the latter. This is true because the average customer is a combination of the intellectual and the emotional with a strong preponderance of the latter. Where the customer is purely an intellectual type it is still quite necessary to specialize on descriptive-argumentative sales methods, while for a customer who is strongly emotional, women for example, pure suggestion produces the best results.

That the average individual is moved by suggestion more than by logic may appear to be out of line with the facts. It may be supposed, and very commonly is, that man is purely a reasoning creature who arrives at a de-

cision only after carefully weighing the arguments for and against a proposition. The fact is, however, that very few people deliberate before deciding the problems daily facing them. This is true because deliberation is exhausting. It requires that the person: (1) keep clearly in mind what the proposition involves, (2) consider the means necessary to acquire the proposition, (3) realize and be able to compare relative values in the alternative propositions. Nevertheless, a show must be made of appealing to the intellect, as the average person does not care to admit that his decisions are swayed largely by emotions. The customer likes to feel that he is deliberating; he does not like to feel that he has arrived at a decision without having gone through a reasoning process. For this reason, it is usually desirable to advance some descriptive-argumentative material in the sales talk, but it should be strictly subordinated to the suggestive appeals so far as the average customer is concerned.

This desire of people to be "rational" has developed what is known as rationalization appeals. A rationalization appeal is a sales appeal which is not the real motivating factor in the customer's decision, but is believed by the customer to be such. An appeal of this type usually follows a suggestive appeal to the emotions. For example, a customer desires a phonograph because his neighbor has one (imitation); because it is the fashion to have one (self-preservation); because it will gratify self (vanity); or because it will render entertainment or amusement. It is desirable to work the customer up to the point of desire by such emotional appeals, but something more is needed to produce action. The customer may be loath to purchase this

article on the grounds of emotional reasons which exhibit his weakness; he desires some logical justification for any such decision. "It produces mental and physical relaxation after the day's work," "It has an educational value," "It makes the home attractive and hence keeps the children at home." These and other such appeals rationalize the customer's desire which has been produced from emotional appeals. The customer is thus given substantial reasons which he can use to fortify himself against any accusation of weakness which may come from his own innermost feelings or from his friends. The rationalization appeal is especially effective in selling luxuries or merchandise for which there is lacking complete social recognition.

It is thus seen that the motives for action are often other than customers imagine. The salesperson must know the customer better than she knows herself. A little logic must often be used to secure action when the real dominating reasons for the customer's desire are emotional in character. To combine suggestion and logic in the right proportions is the task in selling every customer. The relative significance of intellect and emotion in the customer must first be determined upon, then the suggestive and argumentative appeal proportioned to accommodate itself to the situation. Only too often a blind intellectual or emotional appeal is made to every customer. The ability to adapt the appeal to the customer is the measure of the successful salesperson.

Suggestion is based upon the "dynamic nature of ideas." For a long time it was considered that ideas were inert and dependent upon the will for action. It has been found, however, that every idea of an action will result in appropriate action unless inhibited or re-

strained. For example, if one thinks of the letter "o," the muscles of the lips tend to conform this sense organ to the shape which it would represent in sounding this letter. Or, if one thinks of a near-by object, the head unconsciously moves in that direction. Such proofs of the dynamic nature of ideas have been determined by delicate machines which measure these unconscious movements. Parents recognize this law of suggestion in the way they handle their children. They are careful not to suggest things to be avoided. To tell a child not to touch the matches starts a train of thought in the direction of matches which ultimately leads to handling them unless inhibitory thoughts arise.

The application of the dynamic nature of ideas to selling is found in the psychological principle that every idea that enters the mind is held as true unless hindered by some contradictory idea. It is often not necessary to convince the customer of the truth of an idea; all that may be necessary to consummate a sale is to keep conflicting ideas from arising in her mind. This principle is illustrated by an attention-attracting device used by the lecturer, H. V. Adams, in his lecture, "Grapes of Gold." As he walks out on the platform, he takes a small bottle out of his vest pocket and pours a transparent liquid on the platform. He tells the audience that it is essence of peppermint, the sensing of which by people in different parts of the auditorium will indicate the extent of the circulation of air. He takes out his watch and times the experiment, at the same time requesting the members of his audience to raise their hands when the odor reaches them. People in different parts of the audience raise their hands, the experiment continuing for about a minute, whereupon the lecturer pro-

ceeds with the development of his subject. Later on, the lecturer confides the information to his audience that the "essence of peppermint" was only pure water. Strangely enough, some people have been indignant at this admission and have firmly maintained that they "knew peppermint when they smelled it." One old lady said that she couldn't smell it but that it made her eyes water.

From this illustration of successful suggestion the laws of suggestion may be deduced. In the first place, the salesperson should concentrate the attention of the customer on the merchandise. All conflicting ideas and interrupting circumstances must be banished. The Big Idea of the merchandise must dominate the customer's mind. In order to accomplish this first step in the process of suggestion, a certain hardware merchant has moved his stoves from the main floor to individual booths in the basement. The prospect is seated in a booth and the disturbing noises and distracting talk of other customers and salespeople are not only eliminated, but likewise the consciousness of surrounding visible stoves. Segregating of customers is practised in many stores in the music, ready-to-wear, and shoe departments as well as in other sections. If such segregation is impossible, the salesperson's sales talk must be so interesting as to arouse the curiosity and admiration of the customer and make her forget the noises, voices and objects of merchandise surrounding her. The first law of suggestion indicates the necessity of arranging conditions so as to allow the suggested idea to flow easily into action.

The second law of suggestion admonishes the salesperson to suggest only one course of action. The need of the customer for the particular merchandise under

consideration should be assumed. The alternative of not buying should not enter the salesperson's mind, otherwise this implication may unconsciously be expressed to the customer through words or actions. As between different grades of a commodity or different designs of the same commodity, little time should be occupied in comparisons which make the customer deliberate and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each. A commodity which will result in the maximum customer-satisfaction must often be chosen by the salesperson, unknown to the customer and the sales talk held strictly to this article. The singleness of purpose and the directness of the merchandise are conducive to the greatest appeal through suggestion.

The third law of suggestion emphasizes the importance of making positive suggestions. This law is violated in retail selling perhaps more than any other. "You will not regret buying this," is a violation of this law often heard. A positive assertion of the same thought would be, "You will be more than pleased with this." The writer overheard a salesperson say to a particular customer, "That hat doesn't look bad on you at all." He should have said, "That hat is very becoming to you," or, "That hat is just the thing for you," or some such positive suggestion. On being asked how much cotton there was in an undergarment, one salesperson says, "50 per cent cotton." Another salesperson whose sales are larger, says, "This garment is 50 per cent wool." It might seem that there is very little difference between these two statements, but in the former one the whole suggestion is cotton—cheapness, while in the second statement the suggestion is wool—quality.

The problem of correct suggestion came up in adver-

tising Coca-Cola. In a certain section of the country customers had attained the habit of saying to the druggist, "Give me a Coke." Under the protection of this name which was not registered as a legal designation for any known product, competitors were passing off a substitute commodity on customers who asked for Coca-Cola in this manner. At first, the Coca-Cola company intended to place in stores where their product was sold, the following sign: "Don't say Coke, say Coca-Cola." Fortunately this was not done, as it was realized that the whole suggestion would be to "Say Coke." The "Don't" appears insignificant and fades away but the "Say Coke" would appear prominent in the minds of customers. Instead of this sign, another sign was adopted which read, "Ask for Coca-Cola by its full name." The positive suggestion of the latter is no doubt capable of securing the desired action in a larger number of cases.

Negative suggestion may not only appear in the words the salesperson uses, but also in the way she acts. The salesperson's words may indicate that she is desirous of having the customer purchase the merchandise, but her actions may be phlegmatic and so unconcerned as to suggest the opposite action. As a case in point, the writer recalls his first experience canvassing. Admission was refused in a large number of cases until analysis disclosed the reason. Standing up squarely in front of the screen door suggested the impossibility of opening it. When different tactics were adopted, and the salesman, after introducing himself, stepped back in a slightly forward-inclined position, with his eyes on the door suggesting that there was room for the door to open to admit him, the door *did* open in more than

three-fourths of the cases. The suggestion imparted to the prospect's mind flowed into action before the prospect thought what she was doing. The step back and the forward-inclined movement meant just one thing—preparation for the opening of the door. No time was given for inhibiting influences to get in their work because the body of the salesman was out of equilibrium and immediate action on the part of the prospect seemed necessary to meet the situation properly.

Not only may suggestion through the actions be used in gaining the interview but also in closing the sale. A prospect had been given a thorough sales talk and was at the point of decision. The salesperson handed him a fountain pen and told him where to sign his name. The customer was about to sign when he raised his hand, and by the expression on his face and the pucker to his lips the salesperson knew that he was about to give some reason for not signing. The salesperson, immediately grasping the situation, stretched out his hand, went through two or three quick representations of shaking a pen, and at the same instant said positively, "Shake it! Shake it!" The customer followed his example and with each movement the pen got nearer the contract where it finally wrote his name. Here, again, inhibiting influences could not act quickly enough to prevent the suggested idea from flowing into action.

The retail store offers many opportunities for the operation of positive suggestion through actions. If the salesperson lays aside a piece of merchandise as if it were purchased, and asks if there is anything else, the tendency for the customer is to say "No," thereby implying that the merchandise laid aside has been purchased. A customer can be persuaded to follow the salesperson,

by leaning in the direction which the salesperson desires the customer to go. The means employed in inducing decision in the vacillating customer [1] are excellent illustrations of persuasion through the use of positive suggestion.

There must be no breaks in the chain of suggestion—no violation of the laws of suggestion. An illustration of this point recently occurred when a well-known clergyman sought to raise money for a worthy cause. Little cards with a pencil attached had been placed in the pockets of each pew. When the time for the campaign arrived, the clergyman stated his proposition and at the psychological moment he asked each person to reach into the pocket on the pew in front of him and take out one of the little cards. He acted out the operation himself, and it was seen that practically every person in the congregation followed his example. The first law of suggestion had been followed and had secured results. Next he told his audience to sign their names on the top line, give their address on the second line and the amount that they would subscribe on the third line. At this point the second law of suggestion was violated. More than one course of action was suggested. While the clergyman *told* his audience to place their names on the first line, the suggestion dictated by his actions was not to do this; for he did not detach the pencil from the card and begin writing himself. It was noted that many people merely held the cards in their hands as if they were uncertain what to do with them, and finally the cards were put back unfilled in the pocket on the pew in front of them. This violation of the law of suggestion cost the church several hundred dollars. Inhibitions were induced by the possibility of two courses of action.

[1] See page 101.

It has already been stated that the relative proportion of argument and suggestion that should be used in any sales talk depends upon the relative proportions of intellect and emotions existing in the customer. It is likewise true that the kind of merchandise being handled and other conditions influence the extent that these two selling forces should be used. The conditions, exclusive of the customer, under which each functions to the best advantage should be given careful consideration.

Argument is generally desirable under the following circumstances: (1) when a new article is being introduced on the market, or when people have to be educated to change their habits or customs. Such was the case with the typewriter, dictaphone, piano player, vacuum cleaner, safety razor, aluminum cooking utensils, oriental rugs, etc. (2) When the price is high in proportion to the average income of the class for which it is intended. Customers will deliberate regarding the purchase of high-priced articles whether or not the salesperson gives them something to deliberate about, hence the desirability of directing this deliberation into the channels which will favor the seller's viewpoint. (3) When there is keen competition respecting an article, arguments and reasons must usually be advanced to indicate why the article in question is superior to competitors. (4) Arguments are often a form of flattery which pleases the customer. The customer may not understand the arguments but she assumes that she would be convinced if she could understand them. (5) Arguments may secure the confidence of the suspicious customer even though they are not understood fully. Generalizations and suggestions produce suspicion in this type.

Suggestion is effective when used under the following

conditions: (1) In securing action after desire has been created. (2) When the time is too limited for extended arguments. (3) As a supplement to logical reasoning at different stages in the sales talk. For example, after showing the style features in a garment, a positive suggestion such as, "Style counts nowadays," may prove to be an appeal to the instinct of self-preservation which will clinch the former appeals to the intellect. (4) When immediate action is desired. When the customer is a transient and the sale will be irretrievably lost if the sale is not consummated at the time the merchandise is shown. (5) When the merchandise is well known to the customer, but the sale depends upon adaptation to the customer's needs.

While suggestion is being considered it may be well to indicate a kind of suggestion which is not to be used to convince the customer but the salesperson. This is auto-suggestion or self-suggestion. Many salespeople are their worst enemies to their own success. Personal feelings, bodily ailments and imaginary grievances sap the selling force of too large a number of salespeople. If the customer can be induced to act through the aid of suggestion, the salesperson can produce action in herself through the same means. To suggest to oneself, "I am well," "I like my work," "I just love to approach this customer," "Selling is a wonderful opportunity to provide service for customers," and similar ideas, will soon produce action similar to the suggestion. Salespeople are prey to their own thoughts of failure, discouragement and meanness. They are what they think they are. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." If the salesperson desires to be a success, she should put into her mind the idea of success. The banishing

of all thoughts of failure, the straightening of the spine, the squaring of the shoulders, whistling and singing, produce the correct mental attitude which is necessary for success. The salesperson can "sell" herself success by means of suggestion.

# CHAPTER XI

## STORE SYSTEM AND METHOD

The aim of instruction in salesmanship is to develop satisfactory service for the public as well as to bring greater profit to both salesperson and store as a result of higher efficiency. This aim cannot be realized if the sales check is omitted from consideration, since it offers as many opportunities for error and is productive of as much error as is the actual process of selling itself. Innumerable illustrations could be given where customers have become disgruntled and have refused to continue to purchase goods from certain stores simply because of mistakes which were traceable to the master error in the sales check. In some cases, trade has even been diverted to mail order houses and near-by cities, and the community as well as the stores has suffered. However, whether or not sales check errors have actually driven away trade in any particular case, the fact that they exist is sufficient cause for our effort to point them out, to indicate their consequences and to offer suggestions of a remedial character.

### OMISSIONS

Omitting valuable information on the sales check is a source of much annoyance and confusion. Among the most prominent omissions are the following:

(a) Name.

In case of a charge or C. O. D. order this error would prove a serious one. In the former case the store might be the loser of the goods and in the latter case the delivery man might have infinite trouble finding the purchaser unless the address was exceptionally specific.

(b) Letters in name.

Wrong spelling of names cannot be justified under any circumstances. The salesperson should always ask the customer how the name is spelled, even if there seems no chance for error. This method of verifying first impressions is by no means a waste of time. It is in reality a conservator of time, for mistakes in names may mean that the wrong person will get the goods, or more probably that the wrong person will be charged with them.

Some errors of this nature are illustrated in the following:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| F. B. Herman | should be | F. B. Hermann |
| S. M. Blakly | should be | S. M. Blakely |
| C. F. Ruman | should be | C. F. Reuman |
| P. W. Ivy | should be | P. W. Ivey |
| B. O. Schmidt | should be | B. O. Schmitt |
| C. D. Layman | should be | C. D. Lehmann |

(c) Items.

If the name of any article sold is not recorded on the sales check, loss to some party of the transaction may ensue. Especially is this true if it is a charge account. The item cannot be charged without extra investigation and perhaps not even then.

Care should not only be taken in inserting the item but also in inserting the quantity of each item. "Handker-

chiefs, .25 " means very little. This might indicate two or more, depending on the grade. To omit the number in the quantity column of the sales check is in reality omitting the item itself, since no knowledge is tabulated to indicate " how many " items were sold. Only a guess as to the correct quantity can be arrived at from the figures in the dollars and cents column.

(d) " In care of."

A package should not be sent to a public place like a hotel or railroad station unless addressed to some individual. If the individual is not well-known or her address is temporary, she should be addressed " in care of " some responsible, well-known person. Failure to add " in care of " may mean that the customer fails to receive her order, or it may mean that the house loses the goods.

An illustration of the former case is found in the following instance: Mrs. Henry Plummer, Hortonville, N. Y., failed to get her order. She had asked the salesperson from whom she made the purchase to send the package " in care of Mrs. Milner, opposite the post office." The salesperson omitted to add this designation to the main address, and since no such address could be found in Hortonville (Mrs. Plummer lived some miles from town) the goods were returned to the store for a more adequate address. Because of this error, Mrs. Plummer failed to receive the goods in time for the occasion for which they were intended.

(e) Numbers in address.

Much loss of time and inconvenience is caused through omission of figures in addresses, illustrations of which are as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 369 Chestnut Avenue | should be | 3069 |
| 722 Helmuth Avenue | should be | 7722 |
| 58 E. Rock Island St. | should be | 508 |
| 206 Bloomington St. | should be | 2206 |

(f) House number.

Quite commonly, salespeople write down the street address but omit the house number, especially when the name of the street is a number. Some examples of this mistake are seen in the following:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| J. B. Roe | ( | ) | Gemain Ave. |
| O. R. Meister | ( | ) | 18th Street |
| I. L. Brown | ( | ) | Norfolk Ave. |
| J. Houseman | ( | ) | W. 36th Street |

(g) Local address.

Especially when the goods are sold to an out-of-town person, salespeople often forget to ask for the local address. In many cases, securing the town is not sufficient for prompt delivery of the goods, and unless the local address is likewise placed on the parcel the customer will be disappointed in not getting her goods when expected. The following are some examples of local address omissions:

Roland E. Baird, Vinton; should be
Elmwood Place and Magenta St., Vinton, Iowa.

Miss Virginia Newcome, Rock Island, Ill., should be
4th St., Rock Island, Ill.

Mrs. Frank Pierce, St. Martin, Minn., should be
Cor. School House and County Road, St. Martin, Minn.

(h) Locality — town.

Not so common an error, but a serious and irretrievable one, is the omission of the name of the town, when the customer lives in another locality from that in which the store is located. Illustrations of this error are as follows:

656 Jefferson St., Minn., should include Austin.
47 N. 9th St., Iowa, should include Washington.
22 E. University Ave., Iowa, should include Iowa City.
18 E. Hickory and 33d Sts., Iowa, should include Council Bluffs.

Closely allied with the omission of the town is the substitution of the name of the city where the goods are purchased for the purchaser's town. This occurs to a large extent through the misleading term of "City." Thus a customer gave her address as 675 Leon St. The salesperson said "City?" and the customer absentmindedly said "Yes." Later, upon receiving complaint that her order was not received, she was located in another town.

Some further examples of this error are as follows:

307 N. 7th St., Cedar Rapids, Iowa, should be Belle Plaine, Iowa.
1212 Bloomington St., Iowa City, Iowa, should be Tipton, Iowa.
738 Crawford St., City, should be Marengo, Iowa.
201 W. 3rd St., City, should be Moline, Ill.

(i) Omissions and other errors in designation of direction.

Errors of this nature mean much expense in the aggregate as two delivery trips are necessitated by them.

Their apparent insignificance may partially account for their great number. A few illustrations are as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 672 E. 64th St. | should be | W. 64th St. |
| 1498 N. 21st St. | should be | S. 21st. St. |
| 306 N. Berry Ave. | should be | 306 Northbury Ave. |
| 405 Morris St. | should be | 405 W. Morris St. |

### TRANSPOSITIONS

(a) Letters.

Transposition of letters is always due to carelessness and when made in charge names often causes confusion and ill will toward the store. People are charged with that which they did not order and those who have the goods in their possession receive no bill for them. Because of the nature of some names it is very easy to transpose letters, as is seen in the following cases:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| J. G. Neider | should be | J. G. Nieder |
| M. Mackenfroth | should be | M. Mackenforth |
| R. L. Storm | should be | R. L. Strom |
| E. J. Romsley | should be | E. J. Ormsley |
| C. A. Steckel | should be | C. A. Steckle |

(b) Figures.

While there is great danger of error from transposition of letters, there is even greater danger from transposition of figures. In the latter case, if the goods are delivered on a charge account they are often left at the residence of the wrong person, and even if not lost as is sometimes the case, the goods do not get into the hands of the right person at the time they were due and a dissatisfied customer results. Dissatisfaction often becomes contagious and in time may mean a tremendous loss to

the store — all as the result of transposing two small figures.

Some common cases of transposed figures in street numbers are as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 431 Wilmington Ave. | should be | 413 |
| 1708 Ft. Madison St. | should be | 7108 |
| 1614 Columbus St. | should be | 1416 |
| 302 23d Ave. N. | should be | 203 |

(c) Transposition of purchaser's name and street name.

This error, as illustrated in the following cases, is very apt to occur unless the salesperson exercises close attention to every detail of the address.

R. M. French, 478 Brown St., should be
R. M. Brown, 478 French St.
E. L. Forest, 1192 Forrester Ave., should be
E. L. Forrester, 1192 Forest Ave.
O. F. McBride, 2700 McBroom St., should be
O. F. McBroom, 2700 McBride St.
C. G. Dickman, No. 10 Hickerson Apartments, Harkness Blvd., should be
C. G. Harkness, No. 10 Dickman Apartments, Hickerson Blvd.

Together with these cases of transposition of purchaser's name and street name, may be given the closely allied cases illustrating substitution of purchaser's name for street name and vice versa:

Mr. S. T. Shelby, 582 Shelby St., should be Green St.
Mrs. Harrison Crawford, 1781 Harrison Ave., should be Marion Ave.
Mrs. M. O'Brien, 2004 O'Brien St., should be Oberlin St.

Miss L. D. Freeborn, 814 Freeborn Place, should be Miss L. D. Furman.

Mr. Otto Davies, 1262 Davies St., should be Mr. Otto Nordstrum.

### INDISTINCT AND ILLEGIBLE WRITING

One of the most important requisites of a salesperson is that she should write well. A salesperson who writes items, names and figures so that one able to read cannot comprehend them, must soon fail. As a rule, illegibility results from carelessness, lack of pressure on the pencil or because of misplaced carbon. Whatever the reason, the salesperson should examine her sales checks from time to time and note any bad tendencies in writing that exist or are developing. A little systematic practice will enable any salesperson to write plainly. To ignore, consciously or unconsciously, the necessity for correction of careless writing, invites justly the charge of laziness and incompetency.

A. Some errors due to illegible and indistinct writing are as follows:

(a) Names of persons.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| P. W. Quay | written for | P. W. Ivey |
| Miss Janet Nullke | written for | Miss Janet Muelke |
| J. A. C. Fost | written for | J. A. C. Fort |
| Prof. W. R. Frayer | written for | Prof. W. R. Frazer |
| Mrs. B. Juman | written for | Mrs. B. Inman |
| Mrs. N. A. Rolland | written for | Mrs. N. O. Holland |

(b) Names of streets.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Clinton St., | written to look like | Hinton St. |
| Ronald St., | written to look like | Donald St. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Summer Ave., | written to look like | Sumner Ave. |
| Barrett St., | written to look like | Garrett St. |
| Cooper St., | written to look like | Copper St. |
| Case St., | written to look like | Cass St. |

(c) Names of places.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lounsbury | written to look like | Lowsbury |
| Bentonville | written to look like | Hurtonville |
| Fremont | written to look like | Tremont |
| Leesburg | written to look like | Leesbury |
| Beardstown | written to look like | Bairdstown |
| Bairdstown | written to look like | Randstown |

(d) House numbers.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1255 W. 6th St. | should be | 1253 |
| 1012 Maiden Lane | should be | 1017 |
| 373 Elm St. | should be | 573 |
| 606 Worster Ave. | should be | 3606 |
| 189 N. 18th St. | should be | 489 |

It should be noted that 5's and 3's, 2's and 7's, and 1's and 4's are often mistaken for each other.

B. Misplaced carbon causes many errors. The carbon may shift out of its proper place causing omissions, or it may become thin resulting in indistinct writing; but whichever is the case, the trouble as a consequence means a big loss — the deliveryman must make two trips while in some cases there is absolute failure to deliver the goods.

Examples of some errors due to misplaced or poor carbon are as follows:

(a) Names of streets and number of houses.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1158 Mangold | should be | 1158 New Mangold |
| 2145 N. dac | should be | 2145 N. Cardac |
| 182 ney Ave. | should be | 3182 Fordney Ave. |
| 2111 W. 4 | should be | 2111 W. 47th St. |
| 1607 S. 1 | should be | 1607 S. 11th St. |
| 409 N. 17 | should be | 4409 N. 17th St. |

(b) Names of persons.

Most of the errors of this kind are caused by the carbon not being high enough. Here it will only be possible to indicate cases where the carbon was not parallel with the sides of the sales check.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| F. S. Carrol | should be | F. S. Carroll |
| Fred Ruchan | should be | Fred Buchanan |
| J. C. Jacobs | should be | J. C. Jacobson |
| W. Mathe | should be | W. Mathewson |
| Nester Milfo | should be | Nester Milford |

## ABBREVIATIONS

(a) Items.

Less mistakes in interpreting sales items would occur if the salesperson realized that what is evident to her may be incomprehensible to the proprietor, those in the office, or the order-filler. If the items are obscure because of abbreviation or for any reason whatsoever, such mistakes may mean the delivery of the wrong goods, interruption of the perpetual inventory if such is kept, and delay which cannot be viewed other than as a loss of money. No abbreviations excepting standard ones like doz., oz., etc., should be written. Some illustrations of bad abbreviations in sales items are as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Alum. K | for | 1 two qt. aluminum Berlin kettle |
| 1 | L. Mow. | for | 1 Drummer lawn mower |
| 1 | Chair | for | 1 American Walnut Windsor chair |
| 1 | Rem. | for | 1 remnant georgette crepe |
| 12 | Yds. goods | for | 12 yards gingham |
| 1 | Cam. | for | 1 camisole |
| 2 | Stocks | for | 2 prs. stockings |
| 1 | suit | for | 1 misses blue serge suit |
| 1 | F. Cook. | for | 1 Reliable fireless cooker |

Closely allied with abbreviation is the tendency to contract names of items, often resulting in an incorrect name that may be the case of misunderstanding. Thus, the item 1 dog, should have been 1 toy dog; 1 brush, 1 shoe brush; 1 mat, 1 table mat; 1 tablet, 1 note book; 1 lantern, 1 magic lantern; 2 dishes, 2 wash basins.

Futher, there is a tendency for salespeople to place under one designation several items of the same kind but of different quality. In order to make the transaction entirely clear to all parties concerned, each item should have its particular rate specified according to its customary measurement, such as: per, @, doz., pkg., for, etc. Thus, if four shirts were purchased for a total amount of $9.50, they should be separately itemized as follows:

1 shirt ..... $2.50
1 shirt ..... 3.00
2 shirts @ 2.00 ..... 4.00

If certain articles are sold in lots, such information should be clearly specified as illustrated by the following:

3 ties *for* ..... $2.00
1 *nest* bowls ..... .50

1 *pkg.* needles .....$ .10
½ doz. men's hose ..... 2.00
2 *boxes* crayons ..... 3.00
1 black muskrat *set* .....75.00
(scarf and muff)

(b) Towns and street name.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| N. Gate Ave. | written for | Northgate Ave. |
| Man. Hts. | written for | Manville Heights |
| Newburg C. | written for | Newburg Center |
| Grafton C. | written for | Grafton City |
| Bl. Vis. Pl. | written for | Belle Vista Place |
| Green Lk. J. | written for | Green Lake Junc. |
| E. Erbrook St. | written for | Easterbrook St. |
| Spr. Val. | written for | Spring Valley |
| Ft. S. Hampton | written for | Fort Southhampton |

### PHONETIC ERRORS

Errors of this nature are sometimes due to a lack of appreciation of sound. Because of different degrees of clearness in hearing, salespeople differ in their susceptibility to confuse similar sounds.

A second reason for phonetic errors is carelessness. This latter reason accounts for most mistakes of this nature. Salespeople put down on the sales check what they *think* they hear instead of being certain that their conception is the accurate one.

A question will always clear up the possibility of error and impresses the customer as business-like and painstaking. The possibilities are that she has had trouble before on account of misspelled names, places and localities, and will welcome the endeavor to prevent any misunderstanding.

The following are illustrations of some prominent cases of error that have necessitated two or more trips by drivers, verification by salespeople on charge accounts, and disappointment to customers because of delay:

(a) Names of persons.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| R. D. S. Jarden | written for | R. Des Jarden |
| C. R. Gray | written for | C. R. Graves |
| A. Elwood | written for | A. L. Wood |
| M. Kohler | written for | M. K. Ohler |
| P. A. Dare | written for | P. Adair |
| J. W. Dickenson | written for | J. W. Dickerson |
| J. Swing | written for | J. S. Wing |
| E. Fordering | written for | E. F. Ordering |
| B. C. Kay | written for | B. C. Cade |
| R. N. Lighter | written for | R. N. Leiter |
| P. O. Weyl | written for | P. O. Leyl |

(b) Names of streets.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Weller | written for | Woeller |
| Ayre | written for | Ware |
| Woodland | written for | Woodlawn |
| Morton | written for | Horton |
| Elm | written for | Allen |
| Anderson | written for | Henderson |
| Hammond | written for | Harmen |
| North | written for | Fourth |
| Morris | written for | Mt. Morris |
| Church | written for | Birch |
| Roy | written for | Royce |

(c) House numbers.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4001 N. Cliffe | written for | 1401 |
| 2212 E. 8th | written for | 2012 |
| 3556 Madison | written for | 2556 |
| 2223 Raridan | written for | 2233 |
| 6366 Proctor | written for | 5366 |
| 3134 N. 27th | written for | 4134 |
| 878 N. 32nd | written for | 868 |
| 2717 W. 11th | written for | 2727 |

(d) Names of places.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Hanover | written for | Conover |
| Afton | written for | Grafton |
| Bixley | written for | Hixley |
| Fairbow | written for | Faribault |
| Hamburg | written for | Amberg |
| Forest Jct. | written for | Norris Jct. |
| Marston | written for | Mauston |
| Melville | written for | Millville |
| Downsville | written for | Dunnville |
| Iron Lake | written for | Iona Lake |
| Hagerton | written for | Edgerton |

### ERRORS IN ARITHMETIC

Great care should be taken by the salesperson in addition, subtraction and multiplication of figures in items. If errors in figures occur, they may mean loss in dollars and cents to the store, the customer or the salesperson, and general dissatisfaction on the part of all three parties. The customer loses faith in the ability of the store to efficiently tend to details within its scope of responsibility, the store manager feels indignant that a customer should

be lost on account of an error that could have been prevented, and the salesperson feels humiliated by the accusation (spoken or silent) of not only the customer and store manager but of herself.

The recognition of errors made tends to undermine one's ability to successfully withstand the negative suggestion of self-failure, unless effort is made after each error to prevent its future recurrence. If errors in calculation (as well as other errors) are not eliminated by intelligent effort, they become a millstone around the neck of the perpetrator. In other words, the ability to eliminate errors varies inversely with the length of time that they are permitted to exist. Not only this, error is infectious and if permitted to remain in every-day action for any length of time without counter irritants, it will multiply itself in wide directions. Likewise, ability to eliminate error grows with application and disseminates itself as a protective measure throughout the entire conduct of an individual, finally eliminating old tendencies toward error and guarding against the development of new negative qualities.

Mistakes in calculation are due to carelessness, lack of training or lack of ability. Seldom is a salesperson found without the ability to carry out simple arithmetic processes, although it must be admitted this ability varies between wide limits. In other words, any salesperson who cares enough about her work and her own success to put forth a little effort and study, can become proficient enough in calculation to avoid error.

Lack of training, no doubt, accounts for at least one-fourth of the errors in calculation. Practice and then more practice is the only remedy. If the salesperson will begin with simple arithmetic processes, progressing up to

those involving more figures, and spend some time each day working these out, she will soon become proficient to a degree formerly considered impossible. Calculation without the use of paper and pencil may be practiced on the way home and back to work, thereby increasing the salesperson's ability to avoid error and yet not absorbing enough of her leisure time to make her work monotonous. In fact, as proficiency increases, the possibilities are that new interest will grow in the work and more and more of the salesperson's time out of hours will be employed in understanding more about her occupation. It is needless to say that such industry brings its material as well as its mental satisfactions.

Carelessness accounts for two-thirds of the errors in calculation. From one point of view this is merely an aspect of lack of training, because, it may be said, if the salesperson was trained she would not be careless. No doubt this is true in a sense, but carelessness as here considered has a little different meaning. It is here used to account for the errors in all those cases where salespeople have ability and *are able* to calculate accurately *when* they concentrate their attention sufficiently on the problem. Often a certain speed and accuracy is attained in calculation and the salesperson becomes contented and elects to merely *maintain* this efficiency instead of *increasing it*. Because of this fact the calculation becomes mechanical, the salesperson's mind is often dwelling on other things when she is adding, subtracting and multiplying, and error creeps in when the back is turned. Conscious vigilance is the only surety against error, no matter what the field of endeavor.

The annoyance and cost of errors in calculation in different kinds of orders, are illustrated as follows:

(a) Overcharge in C. O. D. Orders.

With a C. O. D. order the driver could not leave the goods unless the customer paid the amount called for, in this case an overcharge. If the customer, realizing that the mistake was no fault of hers, refused to pay the overcharge, she could not have the goods and most likely the store would have lost the sale and possibly a customer. If she accepted the goods and paid the overcharge, her attitude of mind upon coming to the store for an explanation would not be pleasant to contemplate. Whether or not the customer continued to purchase from this store, a mistake of this nature has neutralized many costly devices that a clever store manager has used to build up good will and make his store distinctive for its service.

(b) Undercharge in C. O. D. Orders.

If the customer pays less than she should have paid had the error not existed, it is impossible in some cases to collect the amount of the undercharge and in other cases it is not expedient. For the most part, it is wisdom on the part of the store to make no further claim from the customer and thereby magnify its own mistake, but to bear the loss itself or shift it to the salesperson making the error. Experience would seem to indicate that it would be good policy for the store to bear the loss itself, but to eliminate any salesperson incapable of reducing such errors to a minimum.

(c) Overcharge, Cash and Delivery Orders.

In this case it would be necessary to notify the customer of the overcharge, i. e., to call her attention to the store's negligence, and credit her account with the excess charge

or pay her the difference in cash. She may wonder how many mistakes may have been made in the past, unknown to either herself or the store. While notification of the overcharge will indicate the store's *intention* to be honest, it likewise indicates its *inability* to give service at all times. Formerly, where the customer implicitly trusted the store's calculations, she will now have cause for distrust. For it must be remembered that not only intentionally dishonest people should be distrusted but also those with good intentions but little knowledge. No salesperson can be trusted any further than her knowledge.

It should be realized by all salespeople that their function is to create confidence in themselves, the store, its methods and its goods — and not the contrary. The salesperson who, for any reason whatever, causes distrust to arise in the customer's mind is a liability to any retail store.

(d) Overcharge, Cash and Carry Orders.

If, in this case, the goods are taken home and some time elapses before the customer receives notice of the overcharge, the effects on all parties concerned will be very similar to those just indicated in the Overcharge, Cash and Delivery Orders.

However, if the salesperson can rectify her error before the customer leaves the counter, the evils resulting from the mistake are less marked and are not so permanent in character. The customer has not lost the use of the excessive charge for more than a few moments; she has not had much time to think of what the article cost and hence her impressions are not deep-set and can be more readily removed; the salesperson is before her

to diplomatically explain away the blunder and to distract her attention from it to the goods ordered or to other articles on display; the error will not become a topic for conversation among her friends and hence the good will of the store will not be injured.

Besides these advantages of remedying the error before complications with the customer ensue, might be mentioned the saving of time and the prevention of confusion to the store which result from prompt discovery and remedy of error, as well as the satisfaction accruing to the salesperson herself. Better no error at all, but error admitted, its prompt correction prevents the severest condemnation.

(e) Undercharge, Cash and Delivery, Cash and Carry Orders.

What has been said in (b) regarding undercharged C. O. D. orders applies to these two cases under consideration. If the goods have been turned over to the customer for a definite sum of money, a contract of sale has been completed — goods have been sold and delivered for a consideration. The implication is that the store is willing to dispose of the goods for the sum involved, since a business establishment is, *prima facie* at least, working from the motives of self-interest. Errors it will make in judgment as well as in contracts to buy and sell, but such should in no way be assumed by the customer or called to her attention.

In these cases under consideration, if the error is discovered before the customer leaves the counter the situation is somewhat different. What has been said in (d) regarding Overcharge, Cash and Carry Orders applies here. Tact and cheerfulness on the part of the sales-

person can accomplish a successful correction on the sales check; for it must be remembered that a correction is not successful unless the customer is entirely satisfied.

In justification of such a correction the argument can be plausibly advanced that the sale is not completed until the customer has left the counter, and there is no implication that the store is willing to give up the goods for less than marked when it has not yet delivered those goods to the customer. In other words, the error takes place in the *midst* of a transaction to buy and sell and not *after* the transaction is completed and the goods delivered. Hence, again the necessity of being certain that the sales check is correctly made out *before* the customer leaves the counter.

(f) Overcharge, Charge and Deliver, Charge and Carry Orders.

What has been said regarding the cash orders in (c) and (d) when the customer has left the counter, applies here; with the exception that it is much easier from the standpoint of preventing customers' dissatisfaction to eliminate the excess charge from the books, than it is to refund the actual cash to the customer. In one case a theoretical sum has been taken from her while in the other case tangible money.

Obviously an overcharge on a Charge and Deliver Order is not fraught with the danger incident to an overcharge on a C. O. D. Order, the details of which have already been discussed.

When the customer has not left the counter, adjustment without friction can be made as discussed in (d) and (e), and for the same reasons.

(g) Undercharge, Charge and Deliver, Charge and Carry Orders.

These cases, where the customer has left the counter, are somewhat different from other cases of undercharge under similar circumstances, since, it may be argued, the sales transaction is not complete until a bill has been sent to the customer and paid by her. Then, only, is the transaction closed. Until that time readjustments of a necessary nature can be made on the books.

Since the error is a more or less theoretical one until the customer has actually paid the money for the goods, there is less possibility of dissatisfaction arising. In case the customer has not left the counter, what has been previously said regarding correction of errors would apply here.

### ERRORS IN HANDLING ORDER

(a) Orders sent C. O. D. instead of Charge.

This error is fraught with serious consequences. A charge customer has usually established her credit and is trusted; if an order is sent to her C. O. D. such action intimates that her credit is not good. The customer feels that the store questions her buying or paying integrity. The insinuation is a cruel one especially if thrust into a sensitive or supersensitive nature. The customer has asked the store to have her goods charged and she feels that if the store mistrusts her willingness or ability to pay, it ought to inform her in a fair open way, and not in an insulting manner by sending the order C. O. D.

Usually, on being appraised of an error of this nature, the salesperson retorts that the customer wanted the goods delivered C. O. D. Since it is an exceptional thing

for a charge customer to request her orders sent C. O. D. an error of this kind can be practically eliminated by questioning the customer on this point definitely and then writing on the sales check, " C. O. D. by request," thereby indicating that an understanding of the case exists.

To one who may think that the error just referred to is an uncommon occurrence, it may be stated that a competent authority estimates that over 1000 such errors existed in one year in one large Philadelphia department store.[1] There can be little doubt but that some of these customers were irretrievably lost because of the error. All possibility of such mistakes can be avoided by following the plan of procedure given on the following page.

(b) Orders sent Charge instead of C. O. D.

While this error is not so frequent as that just discussed, it is of sufficient occurrence to be given serious consideration. When such an error has been made, the customer is under the necessity of coming to the store to pay for the order which the deliveryman insisted on leaving without pay; or it may be that the customer is surprised on receiving a bill at the end of the month and, being without an established credit with the store, she may refuse to pay the bill on the grounds that the order was never received.

Whether or not the error develops into the extreme situation just made reference to, errors of this nature cause a feeling of distrust on the part of the customer, which, if fanned into activity by a rapid succession of more trivial errors in her store dealings, may prove to be the

[1] Corbion, W. A., " Principles of Salesmanship, Deportment and System." Page 319.

entering wedge to dislodge this customer's patronage from the store.

In conclusion, the most certain safeguard against the errors portrayed is to systematically gather the information in the following manner:

(a) The attention of the customer should be secured and held. Distractions of all kinds must be eliminated and the impression given that even though the sale has been made, there still remains a very important transaction to be fulfilled.

(b) Write plainly, with sufficient pressure on each letter, making certain that the carbon is in the right place and functioning correctly.

(c) Looking at the customer, the salesperson should ask for her name and then write it down, requesting her to spell it if necessary. The same practice should be followed as regards the street name, house number and town. In other words, each of the four parts of the address should be dealt with as distinct units, *after* the salesperson has placed herself in an attentive and efficient way to receive them, i. e., in an upright position facing the customer.

Sometimes there is a fifth element in the address, viz., " In care of." If the name of the individual is not given, or is at a temporary address, or is not well-known, the salesperson should place some definite responsible name under this caption.

(d) The salesperson should read aloud the name and address in a clear concise manner, without slurring vowels, dropping off endings or " mouthing " syllables.

(e) The entire sales check should be presented to the customer for verification and the salesperson should en-

courage careful inspection of the name, address and items.

If such care is taken in making out sales checks, innumerable errors now being committed will be eliminated, much good will now being lost will be retained and augmented, and a large cause of friction between salespeople and store managers will be wiped out. Such an increase in efficiency will also prove to be a community builder, since the chief thing that a retailer has to offer, viz., service, will have been greatly bettered.

### RECEIVING AND MAKING CHANGE

Misunderstandings arise in receiving cash from customers because the latter often *believe* they give the salesperson an amount of money other than is actually the case. Usually the mistake arises over the denomination of paper money. The customer hands the salesperson what she believes to be a five-dollar bill when it is actually a one or two-dollar bill. The salesperson makes change and returns the silver. The customer is taken back because she expects more money than she receives. Some cases have arisen where the salesperson could not make the customer believe that a mistake had been made by the latter, and the suspicions of the customer were aroused.

Such a misunderstanding is absolutely unnecessary and can be forestalled by the salesperson " calling back " the amount of the money received from the customer. If the customer admits by a nod of the head or a look of acquiescence that the amount called back is what she intended to give the salesperson, then there is no possibility for controversy. The salesperson should be careful in " calling back " the amount not to make the operation mechanical and therefore endanger its passing unobserved by

the customer. The " calling back " should take the form of a question thereby attracting the customer's attention and insuring an understanding.

Not only are errors made in receiving change but also in making or returning it. The change should never be returned in *bulk,* as such an operation avoids an understanding with the customer, and later on, if she has less money in her purse than she had supposed, she will most likely lay the blame on the salesperson instead of looking further for some better reason for the shortage. The amount of change should be *counted out,* piece by piece, commencing with the total price of the purchase. For example, if the order cost forty-five cents, the salesperson should first say, " forty-five cents," then laying down a nickel, complete the addition, calling out " fifty cents," then laying down a fifty-cent piece, complete the addition, calling out " one dollar "— or the amount originally given by the customer. Such a method secures an understanding between both customer and salesperson and also an agreement by the former that she has received the correct amount. Very seldom is there a " come back " on the salesperson when such care to avoid error is used.

The change should always be counted out on the *counter* directly in front of the customer, and not into her *hand.* This method prevents the customer receiving any pieces of money that are not desirable to her, such as Canadian, chipped or disfigured coins, or coins made useless by holes. It also, in necessitating her picking up the money, forcibly attracts her attention to the operation and thus tends to minimize the possibility of her mind being elsewhere.

The change should be delivered to the right person — never left on the counter. The necessity for this caution

can best be illustrated by an experience of the writer's two years ago in a northern Indiana town. A collar had been asked for and received. A dollar was handed to the salesperson, who, on request, directed the customer to a mirror where the new collar was made to replace the old one. On coming back to the counter where the purchase had been made, the customer asked the salesperson, who was waiting on another customer, for his change. The salesperson replied that he had left it laying on the counter. The customer looked all around but could not find it and protested that it was nowhere to be seen; whereupon the salesperson examined the counter where the change should have been and admitted the money had disappeared. On being asked for new change (85c), the salesperson replied that the loss would have to be borne by the customer since it was the business of the latter to look after his change. The customer protested in vain and was forced to pay one dollar for the collar.

# PROBLEMS

## Chapter I

1. Progress in any line of endeavor is essentially dependent upon what attribute of human nature?

2. What is a specialist? The specialist is under what obligations to society?

3. "The manufacturer is a producer of wealth because he *makes* things, but how about the retailer; he only buys goods and sells them at a higher price. He doesn't make anything, *i. e.*, bring anything into existence, and therefore he is not a producer of wealth. All who are not producers of wealth are parasites, and as such should be eliminated from our society."

Criticize line by line. Admitting that the last sentence is true, does this necessarily force us to agree with the rest of the quotation?

4. "In every sale of goods one party to the transaction is always the loser. The retailer must be the winner in the largest per cent of the sales that he makes or he must go out of business."

Point out fallacy in both sentences of quotation.

5. Account for the historical social standing of the tradesman or retailer.

6. "The buying public showed a ready willingness to respond to the new principles of retailing brought forth by the revolution in distribution." Explain.

7. Retailer, "If I can keep my competitor across the street ignorant of better merchandising methods, and if I can profit by a knowledge of these methods, it stands to reason, doesn't it, that I will be the gainer? A man is a fool to give up trade secrets.

Put the other fellow out of business if you can. That's the only way you can live nowadays."

Criticize sentence by sentence.

8. What is the most important change going on in retail selling at the present time?

## Chapter II

1. What are the chief reasons why the salesperson should become an expert?

2. What new functions will the expert salesperson be called upon to perform in the future?

3. "Expert merchandising knowledge reacts on the salesperson so as to increase her efficiency." In what ways does such knowledge perform this function?

4. "Not one customer in a hundred desires to know the history of merchandise, hence the time spent in acquiring such information is unproductive." Salesperson. Do you agree?

5. "Too much low priced merchandise is being sold in retail stores at the present time." How would you remedy this?

6. What stages must the human mind be led through before a sale can be made? Give any evidence to show that salespeople overlook these important stages.

7. What is meant by the assertion that salespeople often lack a "vocabulary"? How can a vocabulary be secured?

8. "The mail order advertising merely dwells upon those features of the merchandise that would be obvious if the goods were actually displayed before the customer." Discuss the value of dwelling upon these "obvious" features of the goods when selling in retail stores.

## Chapter III

1. Enumerate the facts that the salesperson should know about the merchandise.

2. In showing an aluminum cooking utensil to a customer in the effort to make a sale, a salesperson held the article and ex-

plained many interesting facts regarding its manufacture and its capabilities for use. Although her talk was interesting and pleasingly given it did not appear to induce the customer to action.

What further would you have done to persuade the customer to buy?

3. State three services that some article in your department will perform for the customer.

4. In ascertaining the composition of any article, what questions would have to be answered?

5. "The value of any article is not fixed. A salesperson has unlimited possibilities to increase or decrease it." What are some of these "possibilities"?

6. Where can expert knowledge be secured? Which source is the most valuable and readily available?

7. Is it enough for the salesperson to know merchandise from the standpoint of *quality?*

8. What is the best method of preparing a sales talk?

## Chapter IV

1. Discuss the statement, "Salesmanship is chiefly applying an intimate knowledge of human nature."

2. Compare the scientific with the unscientific salesperson in their manner of handling human nature.

3. What are buying motives or instincts? Enumerate them.

4. Using some article in your department, how could you utilize these instincts in a selling talk?

5. Illustrate how the instinct of vanity may be appealed to?

6. A salesperson, in selling a large easy chair, indicated its design, finish and construction, and pictured it in the personal ownership of the customer in the latter's own home. What instincts would you appeal to in order to induce decision?

7. "Appeals to instincts must be tactfully made or the customer will be antagonized." In the case of what instinct is this especially true? Explain.

8. (a) A woman who loves the emulation of her companions

hesitates buying a set of furs, although appeals have been made to her from the standpoints of economy, pleasure, style and utility. What further buying motive should be appealed to?

(b) The wife of a certain professional man often finds it to her interests to associate with women whose husbands have a larger income than does her own. The salesperson's appeals to her ideas of economy and utility obviously aroused intense interest and created a desire to buy a set of furs, but no action resulted. The appeal to what buying motive should have quickly produced action?

9. "One important instinct cannot be appealed to unless the salesperson has an intimate knowledge of offerings in departments other than her own." Explain.

10. "All people are lazy." How can the salesperson make use of this attribute of human nature?

## Chapter V

1. "The differences between people are small."

"People are as different as night and day."

Can you reconcile these two statements? Of what significance to salespeople is your conclusion?

2. A man with a quick nervous walk and a tense expression comes to the counter and asks in a short, sharp, rapid way for a certain article.

What would be your reaction toward this type of customer?

3. The number of hats that a certain customer is interested in has sifted down to three, then two, then one. It seems apparent that the customer realizes that he ought to decide but for some reason or other he hesitates and says that he will come again.

How would you handle such a case, (a) If the customer has slow, rhythmical movements and gestures; a poised, dignified expression; speaks in a slow, careful manner; and gives careful attention to detailed information regarding the hat?

(b) If the customer has a somewhat shifting glance; eccentric and uncertain bodily movements; speaks in a catchy and hesitating

manner; and gives only a divided or haphazard attention to the sales talk.

4. Customer, looking at a piece of suiting, "That's a beautiful cheviot." Salesperson, "That's not a cheviot, it's a serge."

With what type or types of customer would such a rejoinder be suicidal to sales; with what type or types would it make little difference; with what type or types would it strengthen the sales talk?

5. "The salesperson should never force the customer to buy." Are there any exceptions to this rule?

6. Is it always the fault of the salesperson, the goods or the store, when one or all three are held under suspicion by a customer?

Where such suspicion exists, how would you handle it?

7. "Some customers are just ornery; they keep quiet, look wise and try to impress the salesperson with their personality. When I get one like this I just let her know that she can't put anything over on me." Salesperson.

What type or combination of types is here referred to? How would you deal with the customer here described?

8. "A certain customer may exhibit different mental types at different times."

"The average man at any one time cannot be classified with any one particular mental type; he is a combination of different types."

Allowing that these quotations are correct, does the study of the different mental types have any value?

9. "You can't judge a man by his clothes."

"The apparel doth oft proclaim the man."

Which quotation is right?

10. "Certain types of customers demand the argumentative method as the one to be used in selling them goods." Just how do customers "demand" this method?

## Chapter VI

1. What is personality?

2. What is enthusiasm? How can it be developed?

3. Of what does loyalty consist? What are the "conditions" for its existence?

4. Explain why retail selling is monotonous for some salespeople.

5. "Honesty is not merely telling the truth; it is a trinity of honorable dealings." Explain.

6. Describe some common forms of dishonesty in selling goods. How may these be remedied?

7. "Lack of merchandise knowledge may induce salespeople to fall back on their imaginations for descriptive material." What form of dishonesty usually results in such cases?

8. Supposing a traveling salesman desired to look at tooth brushes. Give a sales talk that would induce him to purchase two brushes, and yet one which would be entirely honest.

Supposing any kind of customer, perform the same exercise with collars, shirts or any article in your department.

9. "It doesn't always pay to tell a customer all that you know about the goods."

Discuss from at least two different standpoints.

10. "A salesperson must be sincere with herself; she must act as she feels."

Show wherein the practice of the command embodied in the last clause might vitiate the principle stated in the first.

11. A thorough knowledge of merchandise is the basis for what important element of personality?

12. A certain store advertises bargains but seldom has any to offer; it has different prices for the same goods to different people.

As regards the positive qualities of its salespeople, how is this store defeating its own success?

13. A certain salesperson loafs on her job and fails to acquire expert knowledge of the goods she is selling. What quality or qualities of personality are being destroyed?

14. What characterizes a tactful salesperson?

15. The personalities of a customer and salesperson clash. The customer is sullenly looking at neckties. How might an untactful salesperson antagonize the customer? What would a tactful salesperson do under the circumstances?

16. "Tactless salespeople lack imagination." Explain.

17. "A tactful salesperson diagnoses conditions before proceeding." What is meant?

18. A woman with a troublesome child is endeavoring to ascertain the nature of the values offered at the counter. What most prominent qualities of personality would be needed to handle the situation successfully?

19. On being asked the nature of the material in certain neckwear, the salesperson answered, "Silk." The customer said that she was certain the material was "Three-fourths cotton."

What forces of personality should here be used?

## Chapter VII

1. Why cannot a salesperson afford to be a "diamond in the rough"?

2. Enumerate six acts of courtesy that any salesperson could daily perform with each customer. Name three unusual acts of courtesy that would make one's selling distinctive.

3. "Courtesy is a means of discovering and exhibiting other success attributes." Explain.

4. What is meant by saying that courtesy is an "avenue of approach"? "A medium of exchange?"

5. How may courtesy be developed?

6. Illustrate how discourtesy may become confused with honesty; feelings with sincerity.

7. Of what does promptness consist?

8. Discuss the reasons for lack of promptness.

9. Who are "lookers"? How should they be handled?

10. Explain why direct interrogation is psychologically a crude form of salutation.

11. "Customers resent anything that tends to put them under obligations to buy." Explain.

12. "Cheerfulness is not merely a matter of the face." Explain.

13. What are some "conditions" necessary for cheerfulness?

14. "A salesperson not only sells goods but also her personality." What is meant?

15. Enumerate some smiles that do not indicate cheerfulness.

16. "Unless you are naturally cheerful there is no use 'putting on' a smile. A smile that is not natural is soon detected and appraised at its true value."

(a) Admitting that the last sentence is true, does the first contention necessarily follow?

(b) In place of the word "cheerful," substitute "a salesperson," and after the word "use," substitute "attempting to sell goods." Do you agree to the implication of the new reading?

17. What is the relation between cheerfulness and merchandise knowledge? Knowledge of human nature?

## Chapter VIII

1. How does every-day observation indicate that many salespeople do not understand the selling process?

2. Indicate the different elements that enter into the act of attracting attention.

3. How may words and actions be utilized to arouse interest?

4. "Desire to buy must be created; it doesn't just *happen*." What methods should be used to create desire?

5. When should a sale be "closed"?

6. Describe some methods of closing sales.

7. State some common objections and indicate now they may be met.

8. "There is no way that a salesperson can tell what objection a customer has up her sleeve." Do you agree? State one or two practical ways of determining unstated objections.

9. "An anticipated objection is no objection while a stated objection is twice an objection." Explain.

10. "Objections can sometimes be forestalled by appealing to the instinct of imitation." Explain.

11. Explain how ability to forestall or meet objections may be dependent upon merchandise knowledge. Knowledge of the customer.

12. How should a customer be treated who desires to "shop"?

13. Is there any advantage in knowing competitors' goods?

14. Give three methods of introducing other goods after the sale. Which is the best method? Why?

15. What goods should a salesperson suggest after a sale has been made?

16. When is the best time to introduce other goods?

17. "It is chiefly from the standpoint of service that other goods should be introduced at the close of the sale." Support this contention.

18. A customer asked the salesperson for a linen collar. The salesperson in a pleasant manner took down a box of collars, removed one, then said, "You wouldn't want two, would you?" "No," said the customer, as he returned the congenial smile of the salesperson who wrapped up the collar neatly, in the meanwhile remarking about the results of the election which was the topic in the minds of the people at the time. The customer took the package, left the store and was impressed with the friendliness and courtesy of the salesperson.

What principle of salesmanship was violated?

## Chapter IX

1. Name and define the three kinds of salesmanship and advertising.

2. Illustrate how a combination of these three methods might be used in selling an automobile tire.

3. (a) What is meant by saying that an article should have a "personality"?

(b) How would you give a lawn mower a personality?

4. Illustrate in the form of a sales talk how you would appeal to the customer's imagination in selling woven wire fencing?

5. What should the lumber dealer sell? The barber? The life insurance company? The salesperson exhibiting floor coverings? The kitchen utensil salesperson?

6. (a) Why is the painting of mental pictures a difficult art?

(b) Compare it with the task of the artist in painting a picture on canvas.

7. Why do people buy worthless "securities"?

8. How can a sporting goods salesperson get the viewpoint of the customer?

9. How would you appeal to the customer's imagination in selling a safety razor?

10. "Shoes are no longer shoes, and even prunes are no longer prunes."

Explain in what way this is true, and what has caused the change.

11. "The most effective sales talk is one which depicts the merchandise functioning."

(a) Do you agree?

(b) How would the principle apply in selling a business correspondence course?

12. "Some customers invariably want merchandise the store does not carry." How may this be overcome by an appeal to the imagination?

13. How may the grocery salesperson develop into something more than an "order-taker"?

14. Choose six articles of merchandise and indicate how an appeal to the imagination in each case may be linked up with an appeal to the instincts.

## CHAPTER X

1. How should the proportion of argumentation and suggestion differ in selling the following type of customers:

(a) The fat customer (vital type).

(b) The muscular customer (motive type).

(c) The esthetic customer (mental type).

2. Why is it usually desirable to make a show of appealing to the intellect when selling an emotional customer?

3. (a) Indicate three articles of merchandise which require a "rationalization appeal."

(b) Give a sales talk for each article which embodies such an appeal.

4. "Suggestion is based upon the 'dynamic nature of ideas.'" Explain.

5. (a) What is the first law of suggestion?

(b) Give an original illustration of the operation of this law.

6. Give an original illustration exhibiting the violation of the second law of suggestion.

7. Make a tour of the stores in your locality and list the violations of the third law of suggestion that you encounter.

8. (a) Give an illustration from your own buying experience, indicating how inhibitions have been induced by the presence of two courses of action.

(b) Indicate how this might have been avoided by the salesperson.

9. "When there is keen competition respecting an article, arguments and reason must usually be advanced to indicate why the article in question is superior to competitors."

Indicate three well-known nationally advertised articles that prove this law.

10. What conditions other than the customer must be considered in determining the proportion of argument and suggestion to use in a sales talk?

11. What relationship exists between argumentation and suggestion, and induction and deduction?

12. Give ten illustrations of selling points in nationally advertised goods which are embodied in suggestions.

13. (a) What is auto-suggestion?

(b) How can the salesperson utilize it?

## Chapter XI

1. Illustrate and trace the difficulties that may occur because (a) items of sale have been abbreviated, (b) figures are indistinct, (c) charge name is illegible.

2. "The average salesperson doesn't even know the three R's." Store manager.

What basis is there for such a statement?

3. "Close attention supplemented by careful interrogation is the best insurance against sales check blunders."

Argue in support of this contention using illustrations if necessary.

4. Give illustrations of common errors of omission on the sales check.

5. What is the danger of transposition of figures and letters in names and addresses?

6. The following errors have been made on sales checks. How can you account for them?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2013 | Market | should be | 2013 New Market. |
| 578 N. | llac | should be | 1578 N. Cadillac. |
| 1481 | chid Ave. | should be | 1481 Orchid Ave. |
| 205 E. 15 | | should be | 1205 E. 15th St. |
| 1111 N. 4 | | should be | 1111 N. 47th St. |

7. "A large percentage of mistakes found in sales checks are due to phonetic errors."

Explain and illustrate what is meant. What remedy can you offer?

8. "Incorrect naming of articles sold is a great source of inconvenience to the customer and embarrassment to the store."

Illustrate.

9. A customer, in payment of a $1.25 purchase, handed the salesperson a two-dollar bill thinking it was a five-dollar bill. The salesperson accepted the money, made change and handed back seventy-five cents to the customer. The customer protested,

claiming that she had tendered a five-dollar bill in payment for the goods.

How could this unpleasant situation have been avoided?

10. In a certain store the semi-annual inventory always reveals a shortage in piece goods. The management is certain of the integrity of the salespeople in this department and is at a loss to understand the cause.

Can you give any reason that might account for this shortage?

11. Indicate some problems that arise in the wrapping of goods.

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